THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

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PREFACE

THESE essays were originally written for various Hindi religious magazines such as the *Kalyān* of Gorakhpore, the *Sanātan Dharma* of Benares, the *Sankīrtan* of Meerut and *Shreya* of Brindaban. It is with some hesitation that, at the request of friends, I have decided to republish them in book form. They have more faults than I care to contemplate, being full of repetitions and dealing with a variety of more or less unrelated topics in an inevitably scrappy manner. Many of them were written several years ago and, were I to write on the same subject now, I should express myself somewhat differently. If they have any merit at all it consists only in the fact that they were written in all sincerity and with no propagandist intentions on behalf of any sect or school, Teacher or cult whatever. My thanks are due to the various Editors who made me write them, to whom I cannot offer separate acknowledgements as, for the most part, I have forgotten in which papers the various essays appeared. The one which appears first is actually the most recently written, but it has been placed at the beginning of the book as its title suggests the only type of unity that must be sought for in the various subjects dealt with.

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THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

One of the greatest obstacles to the finding of Truth is the belief, current among religious people, that Truth is written down in some book or books which constitute the 'sacred scriptures' for them. The orthodox Christians consider the Bible to be the inspired word of God inspite of its making a number of statements of fact which are quite certainly incorrect, and orthodox Hindus say that the Vedas are *apaurusheya,* which presumably means that they have no human authors, inspite of the fact that they are quite obviously the compositions of certain *rishis.* Similarly every religion and sect has its holy books which are taken on trust without question, although a great deal of ingenuity has to be expended upon attempts to make their statements square with knowledge derived from other sources.

It is by no means intended here to depreciate those ancient writings, some of which are among the most inspiring productions of the human mind, and contain realisations and intuitions which are of great help to a seeker. But it cannot be too strongly emphasised that an attitude of blind acceptance of what is written in any book is definitely harmful, and effectually serves to prevent the attainment of Truth.

It is sometimes argued that even if the books in question were *not* written by God (whatever that may mean), they were the work of Seers whose knowledge was

far greater than ours and so should be accepted on trust. But this too will not do.

In the first place, we do not know who did actually write the books. It may have been the Seer himself or it may have been one of his disciples with an only partial understanding of his master's teaching. It may even have been someone who wished to gain a hearing for his ideas by fathering them on to a great name. It is, for instance, preposterous to suppose that *Vyāsa* wrote all that appears nowadays in his name, the whole set of Purānas and Epics, for instance, with all their mutual contradictions which not all the ingenuity of a Benares pandit can reconcile satisfactorily.

In the second place, we know for a fact that, during the transmission of the books through all the centuries that separate us from their authors, all sorts of corruptions have crept into the texts. Important passages have been dropped out and new passages have been inserted.

In the third place, even if we assume that in the book in question we have the exact words of the original Seer who wrote it, it is still not desirable that we should accept it blindly. The words of the book are not the Truth he saw, but the verbal expression of it that he judged suitable for the time and place. Everyday we see that words mean different things to different persons, and it is absurdly optimistic to suppose that the words addressed to disciples two thousand years ago will convey the same meaning to us today.

Moreover, the idea that a statement in a book can constitute knowledge is an utter absurdity. The books contain a number of black marks on white paper (or the equivalent), and what these marks signify to us depends upon the ideas in our own minds, and they in turn upon

the experiences we have gone through. Without having lived through the appropriate experience it is quite impossible for us to understand in any real sense the meaning of what is written in any book—no matter who the author may have been.

I repeat, however, that it is not intended to deprecate the study of the ancient scriptures. I, for one, have derived great benefit from such study, and would be the last person to wish for a general bonfire of scriptures. What is wanted, however, is not blind belief but intelligent study. Belief, as the word is usually understood, is an irrelevance, a futility and a hindrance. The mind is the mirror of the universe. If that mirror is kept clean and not distorted, it gives a picture of the world which though, as it were, a two dimensional rendering of a three dimensional reality, is yet a perfectly true one. The mind works perfectly upon its own level. It is a wondrous mirror extending throughout the universe, but if its bright images are to correspond with the facts, it is essential that it should not be distorted in any way. The great distorting forces are hopes and fears, or, as we may put it in another way, it is desire whether positive or negative. When a man says he believes in something or other (I do not mean rational belief based on consideration of evidence), it would be more correct to say that he hopes that it may be true, and, action and reaction being equal and opposite, he at the same time fears that it is not. Every belief then has its corresponding doubt lurking somewhere in the shadow. It is for this reason that men of strong religious beliefs become so fanatical. Silently gnawing at their hearts, insidiously whispering in their ears, is an army of doubts, shadowy beings inhabiting a twilight world but corresponding exactly with the beliefs which, like so

many children's kites, go soaring up into the bright sunshine. It is to silence those whispers, to lay those ghosts in the basement, that the believer strives with all his might to convert others to his creed. Criticisms he cannot stand *because of the echoes that it raises down below where all* should be silence; and so, just in proportion as he increases the force of his own beliefs, he magnifies the tension within, and, filled with an inner hatred of himself, he vents his explosive anger upon others. Thus from a mere fanatic he becomes a persecutor.

What, then, should be our attitude towards the ancient scriptures, or, indeed, towards books in general? Books may be divided into two classes—those that are based upon inner experience and those that are mere words strung together with more or less skill. The latter class may be ignored altogether. It may be asked how, if we are ourselves ignorant, we may know that a book is based upon genuine experience. The answer is that the Truth exists already in our hearts, however ignorant our outer personalities may be, and it is a sheer fact that words that spring from deep realisation raise echoes within us if we listen to them with free minds. The words, as we say, mean something to us. Perhaps there may be other books equally the fruit of someone's experience which raise no echoes within. In that case it is some lack of sympathy or of experience, some knot of prejudice in our minds, that prevents our hearts from acting as resonators, and so we put the book aside. When that happens it is doubtless a pity, but *it cannot be helped; we are not ready for that* particular message and its study can do us no good.

If, however, a book does 'mean something to us', if we have reason, inner reason, to think that it is a record of actual experience, we should set aside all questions of

its date and authorship, its orthodoxy or heterodoxy, its agreement or disagreement with other books. Instead, we should give our hearts to its study, trying to penetrate behind the words to the thought and realisation which those words were selected, however inadequately, to express.

An instance may make it clearer. Shankarāchārya, as is well known, affirmed that everything *is the Atman,* while the Buddha proclaimed as the essence of wisdom the perception of the *Nairātmya* or non-ātman-nature of reality. The average reader has either already taken sides upon the subject, and so treats one of the views as simply wrong, or else considers it a subject for argument, and debates the subject with himself or with others, hoping thereby to arrive at the Truth. But this is quite the wrong procedure. We must remember that reality is not labelled so that a man who has seen it has merely to read the label correctly and all is well. Reality is beyond the mind and its labels. We affix them for our own convenience, but it is we who have made them, and they are never more than symbolic finger-posts pointing the way to what is beyond. Moreover they are symbols that mean different things to different persons.

Instead, therefore, of assuming that *ātmā* and *anātmā* are things of which one is true and the other false, we must remember that they are attempted descriptions in words of some characteristic of what was experienced without words. Instead of asking which is the true description, we should try and understand what characteristic it was of the experienced reality that led Shankara to use just the term he did, and what the characteristic which led the Buddha to use its apparent opposite. We shall then find

there is no contradiction, for, in fact, they were not talking of the same characteristic at all.

I have said so much about books because, nowadays at least, books form the usual starting point of the search, and it is important that in using them we should use them correctly and not incorrectly, for, in the latter case, we shall merely fill our heads with empty notions. The Truth is within us, and books are only useful in so far as they crystallise and make manifest what is, till then, only obscurely known. Such a statement as "God created the world" is, for instance, entirely meaningless unless we have at least some idea of what we mean by 'God' and what by 'created'. It is hardly necessary to say that, for most people who use the phrase so glibly, the words in question have practically no meaning whatever. If such a person is asked about the origin of the world, he will reply 'God created it', and then if asked what he means by God, he will say that God is the creator of the world. This sounds almost too absurd to be true, but it is nevertheless a very common reply, and may serve as typical of a great many 'explanations' which are completely circular.

It is time now to pass from the subject of books to that of a teacher or Guru. There is a current belief in India that it is impossible to make any progress on the spiritual path without the help of a Guru. As a result of this belief all sorts of mistakes are made. One type of person promptly gets himself initiated by the family Guru, who may be anything from a competent professional ritualist to an ignorant mouther of formulated humbug. Another type goes to a famous Guru in one of the great pilgrimage centres such as Benares, Brindaban or Ayodhya, and, for a suitable fee, gets himself enrolled

among the army of the great man's followers. A third, not unreasonably dissatisfied with the observed results in the two former cases, wanders about in search of *sādhus,* of whom he usually sees so many that he finds himself unable to stick to any one in particular, and wanders on hoping ever for the one unique *mahātmā* who, with a wave of his hand, will send the disciple's *'kuṇḍalinī'* spouting up like a fountain.

Now, it is simply untrue that a man cannot make progress—even great progress—upon the Path without the help of an outer Guru, and, though it is undoubtedly a help to have a suitable Guru, it is certain that for most of us there is much that can be done, much that *must* be done, by our own unaided efforts before the presence of an outer Guru is necessary or even useful. This will become clearer when we have seen who or what the true Guru really is.

The Guru is the pure Consciousness itself dwelling in the heart of every living being and particularly that Light as reflected in the *sāttvic buddhi,* the power that gives us certain knowledge beyond all the doubts and hesitations of the mind. That Light dwells in all beings and speaks (that is why some traditions have termed it the Logos, the Word) in our hearts with the voice of conscience, though only too often we confuse its voices with various other voices that speak with louder accents. At this point the reader usually smiles his acquaintance with various learned theories about race, heredity, parental influence and Freudian super-egos. I am not concerned here to enter into these bye-paths, some of which are quite interesting to explore In spite of them all, however, it is a sheer fact that there is a Light within us which knows the Truth,

a Voice which commands the right with absolute certainty. I am quite aware of the many volumes that have been written and will be written in criticism of such views. Views are matters of words, well or ill-chosen, and so are liable to criticism well or ill-founded Facts, the facts which views are intended to explain, are quite another thing. They are not open to criticism Whatever may be said in criticism of the above will be criticism of the words, with which I have expressed it. The fact is there–state it how you please

That is why Shiva, the *Átman* or universal Self is said to be the *Jagad Guru,* the Teacher of the world, and that, too, is why it is said that the Guru is the same as God, a true statement which has enabled a lot of rascally humbugs to get themselves paid divine honours by their dupes. The Guru is the same as God because the Guru is God, the *antaryāmī* or Inner Ruler, dwelling in the heart. There is no need to wander from place to place visiting sacred pilgrimage centres or crag perched monasteries in Tibet in order to find the Guru Quite literally, he is there within us, but, though his silent voice is constantly teaching us, we usually do not listen, and it is for this reason that an outer Guru is a help upon the Path.

The outer Guru is one who has so far identified himself with the Self, which is in all, that he is able to speak with its voice. Not because of great learning, great asceticism or great supernatural powers should a man be chosen as the outer Guru, but because his words penetrate to the heart and raise echoes there within its caves. To the inner Guru we can, and too often do, turn a deaf ear. We prefer to listen to the voices of desires, of the senses and of prejudice and so hear nothing of the soundless Voice within. The voice of the outer Guru, on the other

hand, is at least certain to penetrate to our ears. He too will not compel (for no true Guru will trespass upon the free-will of his disciple), but at least he will put the Truth fairly before us so that, if we refuse assent, it will be with full knowledge of what we are doing. Like Sri Krishna in the Gitā, he will say to us, "Having reflected over this fully, do as thou wishest." It is for us to recognise the truth of his words, to resolve to practise them and to put forth the necessary effort. But men are fundamentally lazy. We want someone to do everything for us, to transform us into *yogīs* without our having to go through the long and painful struggles that are necessary. Consequently we are only too apt to feel that if a Guru cannot do that for us it is he and not we who are to blame.

As stated above, the Guru can only teach us the Path; he cannot force us to tread it, and therefore, before teachings of a Guru can be of any use to us, we must have learnt at least some degree of control over our unruly desires and senses, otherwise his words will be useless to us, for we shall not practise them. Moreover we shall not be able even to recognise the Guru until we have formed the habit of listening to the Inner Voice, since we shall not be able to know that the two voices are in agreement.

If, however, we will bend our efforts towards controlling the senses by the mind and listening in the mind for the Voice which comes from beyond, it is perfectly certain that, as soon as an outer Guru is necessary, that Guru will appear This is as certain as that, if three lines be joined to form a triangle, the enclosed angles will be equal to two right angles As an ancient saying has it, "when the *chelā* is ready, the Guru appears."

But it will not do merely to wait passively for him to appear The *chelā* must make himself ready and

practise a strenuous self-discipline both of his actions and of his thoughts. Above all, of his thoughts, for, as the Dhammapada puts it, "Of all things thought is the forerunner and the chief element; all things are thought." If the thoughts are controlled the actions will follow, but if the mind is like a riderless horse, no amount of austere discipline in the realm of action will be of use.

Control of mind, however, does not here mean the ability to hold it vacant of all thought—that is something that will be dealt with in its proper place—but the subjecting of the mind to the rule of what is inwardly felt to be right, or, as the Gitā puts it, the replacement of motivation based on attraction and repulsion (*rāga* and *dwesha*) by one based on the idea of duty or rightness (*swadharma*). This is the all-important *karma yoga* dealt with in the second chapter of the Gitā, and it must be practised before the aspirant is ready for anything else. The mind is the gateway which leads to the knowledge of the Reality, and it must be thoroughly cleansed of the thorns and thickets of desire before it can turn on its hinges and allow the traveller a sight of the wonderful world beyond.

It has been said before that the mind is like a marvellous mirror extending through the universe. Unfortunately it is usually turned only towards the senses and so reflects only the illusory appearance of the world. Never mind the vexed question as to whether the world is an illusion or not. Like most such problems it is a question of words rather than of facts. The fact is that the world of common sense experience, the world of solid material objects, of separate individual selves, is not the true world, call it what you please. There are no solid material objects, there are no separate individual selves.

All that is illusion, illusion seated in the senses or rather in that aspect of the mind that unites with them. Even the physicists are nowadays coming to see that it is the mind that creates the world of so-called physical objects. Philosophers—even in the west—had seen it long ago, and, though the words in which they expressed their insight were usually, if not always, inadequate, and so liable to hostile criticism, yet it must be always borne in mind by the truth-seeker that insight does not stand or fall by the words in which it is expressed. This is one of the most important things for us to learn. The finger must never be confused with the moon it points to. This is one of the reasons for the contradictory language so often used by mystics. They know that grasp of words will never give grasp of truth, and so by contradictions and paradoxes they attempt to force such seekers as are educable at all out of their grip on words. They behave, in fact, like birds who push their young ones out of the nest, so forcing them to use their wings and exchange the limitations of the nest for the vast freedom of the living air.

To return, however, to the mind, it is the outflowing of desire that creates the world of selves and objects. The Buddha and other eastern seers taught long ago that desire is the creator of the world, and now philosophers and psychologists in their slow way are coming to see it too. Kant taught that we never know things-in-themselves (as he termed the reality), since all our knowledge is moulded by the categories of the mind. William James taught that truth is purely pragmatic, that the mind accepted things as true because they worked in practice, or, in other words, because they satisfied desires. Bergson, too, showed how the intellect was at the service of practical needs (desire again) and added that reality itself was only to be known

by intuitions, while Freud and other psychologists are never tired of stressing how the workings of the mind are controlled by the surges of desire in what they term 'the unconscious.'

Yet in practice all these thinkers have remained bound to the notion of an external world of inert objects. Their thought has lacked courage. However much they taught that things were thought, they have remained fettered by them. Not one of them has been able to mould those waves of thought that ordinary men call things. And yet this can be done. This solid world can "melt, thaw and resolve itself into a dew" before our very eyes, though if any man should come along who can cause even a pin's head to vanish, philosophers and thinkers lose their heads and begin to prattle foolishly of gods and miracles. They have not had the courage to follow the seers and mystics who have taught and shown that the mind must first be withdrawn from the false shadow show that it mistakes for the sunlight of life, withdrawn into an inner belt of darkness which some have termed the mystic death, others the dark night of the soul, before its mirror is turned round to face reality and reflect the Sun of Truth shining beyond the darkness.

Nothing in all the unplumbed depths of the universe is too far away in space, nothing in all the countless millions of years of time is too remote for us to know it here and now. Even the trivialities of crystal gazing show how space and time are no bars to the mirror of the mind of which the actual crystal or what not is but a symbol, a wretched concession to our faith in outward things. The real *yogī* needs no crystal, no pool of ink to help him see. He has only to direct his mind to that which he wishes to know and it is there in front of him.

But it is not such knowledge that the *yogī* seeks. Knowledge of forms, however remote in time or space, is but a knowledge of illusions. Far beyond all forms, shining for ever in the light of an eternal summer, lies the Realm of Truth. None can describe that Realm, though gleams of its splendour have gilded the words of poets and thinkers so that they tell us fitfully of a beauty beyond all words, a beauty which is the same as Truth.

To reach that Truth the inner path must be trodden. The mind, first, purified by the practice of right action, must learn to check all its movements and to allow its flame to burn steadily like a lamp in a place where the winds of desire no longer blow.

It is no use trying to hold it still by sheer force, no more use than it would be to try and fix the flame of a lamp by a pair of pliers. The *yogī* must study its workings and gain insight into the currents of desire that cause trains of thought to spring up and pursue their endless linked processions in our hearts. It is not force, the so-called force of concentration, but calm insight and detachment that will bring about the cessation of the streaming phantoms, and it is only when they have ceased that the mind "stands in its own nature," as Patanjali puts it, and is ready to reverse itself and plunge into the cool and life-giving waters of the Realm of Truth.

Thus the mind goes beyond itself. The drop merges within the shining Sea of Light, yet, since the whole is mirrored in the drop, the drop itself becomes the Sea, no longer self but All.*

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THE BIRTH OF SRI KRISHNA

It is now more than five thousand years since the Supreme Lord manifested Himself with all His powers in the prison of Kansa in Muttra. Five thousand times since then the drama of His birth has been celebrated with rejoicing in palace and hovel in countless towns and villages. Useless to repeat the oft-told story of that Divine birth, for it is known to all how

निशीते तमउद्भूते जायमाने जनार्दने ।
देवक्यां देवरूपिण्यां विष्णुः सर्वगुहाशयः ॥

"At midnight, in the thickest darkness, when the people were suffering great afflictions, Vishnu, the Dweller in every heart, revealed Himself out of the divine Devakī in His full glory like the full moon rising in the East."

I have said that it is known to all, and so it is in the sense that the story of the historical event is known to most, but what of the inner significance? How far do we know that? Sri Krishna has said that those who know the essential nature of His Divine birth and actions gain liberation (*mukti*) and go to Him. What is this knowledge that gives such great results and how may it be attained? Certainly no knowledge of mere historical facts, however great, has ever been known to give *mukti*, and it is not from books that the *'mṛtasañjīvanī vidyā'*, (the life-giving knowledge) can be learnt.

The Bhāgawata describes the birth of the Lord as secret (*guhyam*) and says:—

एवं जन्मानि कर्माणि ह्यकर्तुरजनस्य च ।
वर्णयन्ति स्म कवयो वेदगुह्यानि हृत्पतेः ॥

"The action of Him who is actionless, the birth of Him who is birthless—thus the wise describe the secrets told in the Vedas concerning Him who is the Lord of the heart."

History may teach us that he who is born must surely die, but it can never teach us what is meant by the birth of the birthless, while philosophy is even worse, for it will gravely inform us that that which is birthless can never be born. Clearly, we shall gain no help from these branches of knowledge, but must turn in another direction if we are to understand this supreme mystery of the ages.

Let us first try and get some idea of the purpose of the *Avatāras* All know Sri Krishna's statement that He comes for the salvation of the good and for the destruction of the wicked, but, if this is a mere historical fact, if this destruction of the wicked merely took place at the end of *Dwāpara yuga*, then it will be but small consolation to those who seek salvation now, or are oppressed by the wicked in this twentieth century. If, on the other hand, it is said that He saves the good and destroys the wicked at all times, then it will not be clear what is the necessity of *avatāras* at all.

In the first place, who are these wicked ones who are destroyed by the Lord? We all like to flatter ourselves that we are the good, and that those who oppose us are the wicked. Did not both parties in the late war pray to God utterly to destroy their wicked enemies and to save their righteous selves? It pleases us to think that all our misfortunes are the result of the wickedness of our oppressors and that, if they were destroyed or converted, we should be perfectly all right. But this is an entire delusion. It is not external enemies who oppress us, but we ourselves who oppress ourselves.

आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ।

"The self, verily, is the friend of the self; and the self also is the enemy of the self." (*Gītā.*)

He who appears to oppress me from without is but the instrument of my own *karma;* his destruction would in no way lessen my sufferings. It is my own evil desires and tendencies that are my oppressors; it is they who cause me to suffer; and it is they who are the wicked who must be destroyed.

But how is the fact, that an *avatāra* took place in *Dwāpara yuga,* or at any other time, going to effect the destruction of the six enemies* so firmly established in my heart? In fact it is not going to do so if my idea of an *avatāra* is merely one of some wondrous Divine hero who descended on this earth long ago, performed His marvellous feats and then vanished once more.

In reality, the actions of an *Avatāra* are all symbolic, and were performed in order to teach desire-blind mortals those inner truths which they are not able to perceive with their own unaided vision. That the Supreme Reality is One, but yet exists in many forms; that all this vast universe exists within that one Reality, that all powers, 'bad' as well as 'good', issue forth from Him and in the end return to Him; that He is the inner Self of all beings; and that no bonds can bind the man who attains to Him; how difficult it is for us to understand these truths. The mind, used only to dealing with material objects, recoils baffled, and is unable to grasp them in their naked spiritual reality. We may even meditate upon them, but for want of a foothold we can make small progress. If, however, we turn to the contemplation of Sri Krishna's *Līlās* as

* Desire, anger, greed, delusion, envy and pride.

related by tradition, our task will become much easier. We see the one Krishna dancing with the many *gopīs* and each *gopī* thinking that her Lord is with her alone, we see the whole universe with all its gods and men within the body of the Lord on Kurukshetra's battlefield; we see the return of Kansa to Krishna, liberated in the very moment of destruction, we see the Divine Charioteer guiding all but bearing no weapons in the great battle, and we see fetters and bolts open of themselves as Vasudeva emerges from the prison with the Divine Child in his arms.

Meditating with love and devotion on the thought of these *Līlās,* the knowledge of their inner meaning will naturally and automatically spring up in our hearts, and those truths that we failed to understand when presented in the dry form of philosophic statements will come to life in our souls in their essential spiritual nature beyond the range of words or thought

It is for this reason that the *Līlās* of Krishna are said to be *nitya* (eternal). It is not that Sri Krishna is forever beheading an eternally terrified Kansa in an eternal Muttra, but that the spiritual laws which are symbolised for our benefit by these acts are always operating in our hearts and in the world, now just as much as five thousand years ago.

Now, as then, the people are oppressed by evil rulers, but those rulers are not any material kings. It is *kāma* (desire), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed) and *moha* (delusion), who are the true rulers of this world, our so-called kings are merely puppets in their hands. It is they who oppress us with their tyranny and shut us up in the prison of the body. There, in the darkness of our

hearts, the birth of Sri Krishna has to take place or else there can be no salvation for us.

It is in Vasudeva and Devakī alone that Sri Krishna is born, and who they are we can learn from the Bhāgawata itself.

सत्त्वं विशुद्धं वसुदेव शब्दितं यदीयते तत्र पुमानपावृतः ।

"It is pure *sattva* that is called *Vasudeva,* for it is in that pure *sattva* that the Lord makes His appearance unveiled (by *rajas* or *tamas*)"; and Sridhara Swami explains that *sattva* means either *sattva guṇa* or else the *antahkaraṇa* (mind).

Who Devakī is may be seen from the adjectives which are applied to her. *Devarūpinī, Sarvadevamaya Devakī* is the *Daivī Prakṛiti* which is the Refuge of the *Mahātmās* (दैवीं प्रकृतिमाश्रिताः), the living Light of pure consciousness which streams like Gangā from the Feet of the Lord and in which He Himself becomes manifest when the *antahkaraṇa* is pure and *Sāttvik.*

When that Divine Birth takes place in our hearts, the fetters of our bondage will fall from us, the bolts of our prison house will open, and the wonders of the *Līlā* will commence.

Had it not been for the vivid imagery of the historic *Līlā* we should never open our eyes to the glory of the *Nitya Līlā.* We should remain among the fools who despise Him when refuged in a human body *(mānushim tanum āshritam),* not knowing His Supreme nature, Him the Lord of all beings.

परं भावं अजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम् ।

Certain it is that we are unable directly to perceive that Supreme Lord whom the *Shāstras* declare to be beyond the reach of speech or thought, unless He Himself

takes birth in our hearts, and equally certain is it that without knowledge of Him we can never escape from the bondage we are in.

तमेव विदित्वाऽति मृत्युमेति नान्य पन्था विद्यतेऽयनाय

"Having known Him the sage crosses beyond death, there is no other path to Eternal welfare."

We are back at the question from which we set out. How are we to know the action of the Actionless, the birth of the Birthless? From the Bhāgawata comes the answer –

स वेद धातुः पदवीं परस्य दुरन्तवीर्यस्य रथाङ्गपाणेः ।
यो मायया सन्ततयाऽनुवृत्त्या यजेत तत्पादसरोज गन्धम् ॥

"Only he can know the nature of the Supreme Creator, the all powerful Wielder of the *Chakra,* who with sincere and ceaseless devotion serves the fragrance of His lotus Feet."

By the practice of loving devotion our hearts will be purified, and in those purified hearts He Himself will be born. He the Birthless, for He is in our hearts already, will be born anew, for though He is there yet we see Him not Then, too, shall we see the action of the Actionless, for, though He acts not, yet by His presence will our enemies die.

Then shall we understand His words:–

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥

"For the salvation of the good, for the destruction of the evil, for the establishment of Dharma I am born from age to age," and then at last will His further words come true –

त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन ।

"Having abandoned the body, he cometh not to birth again but cometh to Me".*

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* First published in *Sankirtan,* Meerut.

THE WORSHIP OF GOD

All *'āstika'* Hindus will admit that the worship of Bhagawān is the foremost duty of men, even though they may differ in opinion as to how that worship should be performed and as to what particular aspect or form of God is to be worshipped. In the first place, we may set aside the disputes as to whether it is better to worship Him as Shiva or as Vishnu, as Rāma or as Krishna, because the *Shruti* has declared and the *Mahāpurushas* have confirmed that all these Forms are forms of the one Supreme *'ekamevādwitīyam'*. The choice of any one of them as one's *'Ishta'* is one which depends on *'samskāra'*, and is not what I wish to discuss just now.

Agreeing, then, that all worship should be directed towards the one Supreme Reality, and that, whichever of His Forms be selected, it should be conceived as an embodiment of the Supreme and Changeless One, it remains to enquire what method of worship should be adopted. Too often we are inclined to assume that the ringing of bells and the blowing of conches, the offering of flowers and water, the repetition of *stutis,* the singing of *'bhajans'* and all the acts which have been handed down to us by our ancestors *in themselves* constitute worship of God, and that, having performed them in the traditional manner and in the proper traditional order, we are entitled to rest from our labours with the feeling of having performed our whole duty in the matter.

Such a theory has the merit of simplicity, no doubt, but it also has the great demerit that it does not seem to

work! Thousands of people are seen to perform these acts in the most regular manner, but are not seen to gain the fruits which the *Shāstras* and the *Mahāpurushas* promise as the results of worship; and therefore, since facts are always facts, we must enquire as to what is wrong with the theory.

First of all we must know something of *Bhagawān's* nature, for it is not possible to worship that of which one knows nothing. Although it is true that the true knowledge of God's *swarūpa* is the final fruit of worship, and that He is also beyond the reach of words and thought alike *(अवाङ्मनसगोचर)* yet we must have *some* knowledge to start with, and that knowledge is fortunately available through the record of the experiences of the great Seers of the past as embodied in *shāstras* and other books. Again, there is no need to dispute about the relative importance of the various *shāstras* or books claiming to be *shāstras,* because they are all in agreement in one point namely, that the ultimate Reality (*param tattva*), call Him or It by whatever name you please, is a spiritual (*chinmaya*) one. The *'Satyam jñānam anantam'* of the Upanishads, the *'adwaya' jñāna tattva'* of the *Bhāgawata,* the *'dharma kāya'* or *nirvāna'* of the Buddhists, the God of the Christians and the Allah of the Muslims, all, whatever else they may or may not be supposed to be, all are quite definitely considered to be spiritual Realities and not material. This is so well known that to give *'shāstrik pramānas'* would be waste of time and space, for, once having started to quote texts, one would scarcely know where to stop.

Now, whatever word one uses, *'bhajan'* (which comes from *'bhaj',* to serve), *'sevā'* (which has the same meaning)

or *'upāsanā'* (which literally means 'sitting near'), it will at once become clear that the worship or service of a *chinmaya Bhagawān* must itself be *chinmaya.* A spiritual reality cannot be adequately served by a material one, and this is the meaning of the well known saying देवो भूत्वा देवं यजेत्—"having become (like) the God, one should worship the God." (My purpose in putting in the word 'like' in the above verse is not to raise any *dwaita-adwaita* quarrels, but to state the fact in a form that will be provocative to no one) Its essential meaning is that only spirit can 'sit near', that is to say, perform *upāsanā* of spirit.

Now, the word 'spiritual' (*chinmaya*) is one which we frequently use, but usually without any attempt to think of its real meaning. We talk glibly of *Bhagawān's chinmaya* Form, of His *chinmaya dhāma,* of *chinmaya Gangā* and so on, but we seldom stop to think of whether we have any adequate idea of what the words mean. Quite a number of people seem to think that to say that *Bhagawān's* Form is *chinmaya* merely means that it is very beautiful, or that His *chinmaya dhāma* merely means a *loka* that is not subject to destruction at *Pralaya* or else, that it is simply a form of praise. But of course, these are not the meanings of the word. It means, as everyone knows, if he thinks about it, *chit maya,* that is to say, made of *chit* (Consciousness or Spirit) as opposed to that which is made of matter.

If, therefore, we wish to perform *upāsanā* of *Bhagawān* (that is to say, to "sit near" Him), we must try and get some understanding of the nature of *chit* and of *chinmaya* realities. Now, it is true that we are in the habit of talking freely about *chinmaya vigrahas, chinmaya* temples, *chinmaya Kāshī,* etc., and there is a sense in which

we are perfectly correct in so doing. I am not concerned, however, to go into that just now; for it is perfectly certain that, if we are honest with ourselves, these things *appear to us* to be material objects, and as such do not give us an idea of what constitutes spiritual reality.

There is, however, one spiritual reality of which, veiled though it be by its manifestation through the semi-material nature of the mind, we have a direct experience (*pratyaksha anubhava*), and that reality is the light of consciousness in our own hearts and which is usually known as *Ātmā*. It is true that most of us only perceive that light of consciousness as it is filtered through the *antahkaraṇa* and as it expresses itself in acts of thinking and feeling, but, even so, it still remains true that in our own consciousness we find something which is totally different from any material thing whatsoever and which is our *only* direct contact with spiritual Reality. That this inner reality may be used as an indication of the nature of *Bhagawān* is shown by the fact, He is called *Paramātmā* as opposed to simply *ātmā* or *jīvātmā*, or, to use *Vaishnava* terminology, He is *chidghaṇa* while the *jīva* is *chitkaṇa*.

Notice, too, that in describing His *vibhūtis* in the Gītā, *Bhagawān* commences by saying that He is the *Ātmā* hidden in the hearts of all beings: अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः। In truth, He is in all things both moving and unmoving, and is That which is beyond all things as well, for He has added: विष्टभ्याहमिदं कृत्स्नमेकांशेन स्थितो जगत्।

It would be a mistake to suppose that He is only within and not without. He is without just as much as He is within, for, in reality, there is no difference between within and without, and in the end it is seen that all things are *Vāsudeva*. Nevertheless, it is only by plunging into

the depths of our own hearts that we can at first approach Him; for it is only there that we are in *direct* contact with Him. He who cannot feel Him, however faintly, in his own heart, will never be able to see Him anywhere else, and he who has once seen Him there in that *chinmaya dhāma* will find Him visible in all things and in all beings.

Let us then give up empty arguments as to the nature of *Vaikuṇṭha* or of *Kailāsa*, of *Goloka* or *Sāketa Purī*; for such *dhāmas* are beyond our present experience, and those who talk about them most know least; for the Upanishad says मतं यस्य न वेदस : "he who (thinks he) knows it does not know it." We live in this world at present, and we must seek and serve Him where He is to be found even within the world, namely, within the hearts of all beings. Only when we have learnt to love and serve Him in all beings will He give us the right to serve *Him in His own Swarūpa.*

That this is no mere personal opinion of mine, but is the eternal truth, can easily be seen from a perusal of any of the great *shāstras* of the world.

In the Bhāgawata *Bhagawān* says that "he who foolishly neglects Me, the Supreme Ruler, the *Ātmān* present in all beings, and merely worships a *vigraha,* is throwing offerings of ghee into ashes"—

यो माम् सर्वेषु भूतेषु सन्तमात्मानमीश्वरम् ।
हित्वार्चां भजते मौढ्याद् भस्मन्येव जुहोति सः ॥

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and goes on to say that He is not pleased by worship through a *Vigraha* unless it is coupled with love towards all beings. Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu stated that compassion for all beings is as important as delight in

Harinām (जीवे दया नामे रुचि)। In the Christian Bible, too, we find Jesus saying, "If a man loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God Whom he hath not seen?" Lastly, the Lord Buddha told His followers that, "just as a mother loves her son, her only son, so should you be filled with a boundless love for all beings."

That *Jñāna* is no *Jñāna* which sees difference between oneself and others, and that *bhakti* is no *bhakti* which does not love Sri Krishna in the heart of all. To sit in *samādhi* for years on end, to be indifferent to heat and cold, hunger or thirst, to weep oceans of tears at *Kīrtan* or to pass one's days in *Pūjā* and one's nights in meditation, all is of no avail unless it is coupled with a burning love for Him in all beings. Nor will it do to love Him in one's own family but not in others, to love Him in one's own caste but not in other castes; to love Him in one's own countrymen but not in foreigners. All that is merely an inflated form of selfishness He is in *all* and He must be served in *all*, not forgetting the lower animals to whom we too often think we have done our duty if we merely refrain from killing them for food or sport. To increase one's own flesh by eating the flesh of other beings is no action for a *bhakta* Far other have been the actions of the Great Ones, as is shown by the well known story of the Lord Buddha who, in one of His previous births, gave His own life to feed a starving tigress and her cubs.

There is but one Life throughout this whole universe, and that Life shines in the hearts of all. What sort of a *Bhakta* can that man be who looks with eyes of greed upon the flesh of his own brother? मृत्योः स मृत्युमाप्नोति य इह नानेव पश्यति— "from death to death he goes who sees any difference here."

Let us then seek Him by plunging deeper and deeper into the cave of the heart, and then serve Him by plunging *outwards in wider and ever wider circles of selfless love* for all beings These are the two halves of *sādhanā* and both are necessary. Without knowing Him in one's own heart, service of others degenerates into mere humanitarian *philanthropy, and, without the love of Him in others,* meditation and *bhajan* degenerate into mere selfish seeking of one's own salvation. It is not the sterile worldly philanthropy of the West that is needed. Hospitals, dispensaries, 'relief work', all these are good, but, in themselves, they are on a much lower plane. On the other hand, mere selfish pre-occupation with one's salvation is equally, if not more, sterile. In Brindabān I once saw a Vaishnava dying of typhoid. All round, coming and going, were "Vaishnavas" with *their mālās in their* hands, but there was no one to give him even a glass of water! What can be the value of such '*bhajan*' as that?

What is needed is not a fussy rushing about seeking to do good while all the time immersed in *ajñāna.* The man who cannot swim can never save his drowning brother, and none can truly serve men but they who know something of God. The true service is that which is based on *jñāna* and *bhakti,* and may be on any plane from the material to the spiritual, from the humble giving of bread to the divine giving which is the greatest of all givings, the giving of Truth and wisdom. Just as the all-pervading *ākāsha* completely and effortlessly fills all vessels according to their shapes, so the one essential is an all-pervading love which, without strain or effort, will fill the varied needs of all beings as they come within its field of vision according to their needs and its own abilities.

When we have accomplished this, when with clear eyes we see Him within, and with pure love we serve Him without, then and then only will His words apply to us:—

"Truly I promise thee, thou shalt come to Me; for thou art dear to Me".*

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THE NINEFOLD PATH OF BHAKTI

We read in the Srimad Bhāgawata that when Hiranyakashipu asked Prahlād to repeat some verse that should embody the essence of what he had learnt, he repeated the following:—

श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनम् ।
अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यं आत्मनिवेदनम् ॥
इति पुंसार्पिता विष्णौ भक्तिश्चेन्नवलक्षणा ।
क्रियते भगवत्यद्धा तन्मन्येऽधीतमुत्तमम् ॥

"Hearing of Vishnu, repeating His praise, remembering Him, service of His Feet, worship of Him, prostration before Him, servitude to Him, friendship to Him and self-dedication to Him; the proper practice of this ninefold devotion offered, to the Supreme Spirit Vishnu, this, I think, is the best of what I have learned."

In these verses Prahlād sets forth the method which should be followed by those who would attain to Bhagawān by means of the *bhakti* path

In the first place we have to hear about Vishnu. This is the first step, and must precede all else. The word Vishnu does not at all imply any sectarian deity, but is derived from the root *'vish'* and signifies the All-pervading one.

Hearing of Vishnu does not mean hearing about any special form with four or any other number of arms, but hearing about the existence and nature of that One Supreme Reality which is described in the Bhāgawata as the *"adwaya jñāna tattva"*, the "One without a second" of the Upanishads, which as the Bhāgawata goes on to

say, is known by the alternative names of *Brahman, Paramātmā* or *Bhagawān.*

The first step must always be the hearing about this One Supreme Reality, either from the *Shāstra* or from the mouth of someone who knows of His existence. Until we have heard of His existence it is clearly impossible for us to take any step on the path, because, until then, we are quite unaware in which direction we have to go. We must, then, first hear of Him who is *"āditya varnaṃ tamasā parastād"*, the One shining like the sun beyond the darkness of the world.

After hearing of Him, the next step is repeating His praise. This follows naturally from the first step, since it is a universally observed fact that when we hear any piece of news that really interests us, we cannot rest until we have repeated it to someone else. We read some interesting fact in the newspaper or we read some funny story in a magazine and at once we feel an urge to repeat it to anyone who happens to be present. What news could there be more interesting than the news that beyond this world of darkness, ignorance, hatred and sorrow, is the Ever-blissful One, the All-knowing Eternal, the Father, Mother and Friend of the whole universe, before whose knowledge, the wisdom of the wisest is but the folly of children, and before whose power all the armies and machines of earth sink into insignificance?

If, then, we have really heard of Him,—and it should be noted that 'hearing' means hearing in the heart, not merely hearing with the ears,—it will follow naturally that we shall not be able to rest until we have repeated the news to others, and this is the second step called *'kīrtan'* or repeating His praise.

But mere hearing and praising is not enough. Having heard and praised, we must make an effort to increase our realisation of the Truth, and to build that realisation into our inmost hearts so that the knowledge becomes an integral part of ourselves. After *kīrtan,* therefore, comes *smaraṇa,* the constant effort to remember Him in our hearts. This practice is an extremely important one as is shown by the fact that it plays an essential part in the teachings of all the great religions. The Christian is taught to practise "living in the presence of God", the Buddhist to meditate perpetually on the transiency of the world and the Eternity of *Nirvāna,* and the Hindu to remember always the form of the Lord, seated in his heart. If Bhagawān only existed in isolation outside the limits of the world, then His blissful existence could be but little consolation for us in our sorrows. The important fact for us is the fact that He is also *within* the world, that He is seated within our own hearts, "nearer to us than breathing, closer than hands or feet." It is a realisation of this fact that is brought about by the practice of constant remembrance.

Perhaps it will be objected that the word *'Smaraṇa'* stands for *'Līlā smarana',* i.e., the remembrance of the various *Līlās* or actions performed by the various *Avatāras.* Well, what if it does? The Divine actions of the *Avatāras* were performed in order that some knowledge of the Divine nature might penetrate to our darkened materialistic minds which are unable to understand Divine truths unless they are presented to us in a concrete form just as, nowadays, the cinema is used by the doctors of the Public Health Department to convince the public of the dangers of infection and the necessity of hygiene by bringing before

them these truths in a vivid pictorial form which can appeal to all.

Tattva smarana or *Līlā smarana,* it is all one in the end, since the purpose of both is to bring about a realisation of His presence within all things.

After *smarana* comes *'vandanam',* which, however, does not mean mere prostration from time to time in temples or before *mahātmās.* It is an attitude of mind which, whether accompanied by the physical act of prostration or not, considers the self as nothing, as but the dust on the Feet of that Lord who, as the result of the previous practice of *smarana,* the *sādhaka* has realised to be within his heart. Having found Him within his own heart, the next step for the *sādhaka* will be to realise that He is also in the hearts of all. The practice of *'vandana',* of prostrating oneself either physically or mentally before the feet of the Lord in the hearts of all, is the means prescribed for the bringing about of this realisation.

Having realised His presence in all beings, the next and obvious step is *'pāda sevanam',* worship of His Feet. Once more, it is necessary to pause and make sure that we understand this stage properly. In the first place we must remember the *Shruti*: न चक्षुषा पश्यति रूपमस्य —"not by the eyes can His Form be seen." If then His Form cannot be seen by our eyes how can we perform service of His Feet? The key is to be found in another *Shruti* which says. पादोऽस्य विश्वा भूतानि— "His Foot is the universe of beings." We can now at once see how this stage follows on directly from the last one. Having, by the practice of *vandana* realised, at least partially, His presence within all beings, it is obvious that the next thing to do will be to perform

service of Him in all beings, and this is what has been called service of His Feet.

Having got so far, there is some danger that the *sādhaka* may get entangled in mere humanitarian work which, good as it is, is not in itself sufficient. There is considerable risk that he may forget that it is the service of God *in all* beings that he is to do, and may fall into the delusion that there is no Reality apart from humanity.

In order to prevent this mistake he is bidden to go on to *'archana'*, worship of the Lord. Bhagawān is not only present within all beings of this universe, He is also beyond the whole universe as well. In order to serve Him it is necessary to serve Him within beings, because we must serve Him where He is available to us; but we can and should *worship* Him in His transcendent aspect as well, in that aspect which is beyond all worlds and whose *ārati* is performed by those very worlds as they rush through space in their orbits. This is the aspect which is realised by the practice of *'archana'*.

This realisation having been gained, it will now become necessary for the *sādhaka* to establish himself in some particular *bhāva* or relationship with His Lord. The first such relationship is that of *'dāsya'* or the relationship of a servant to his master. This is obviously the first *bhāva* that will arise in the heart of the *sādhaka* who has achieved some realisation of the previous stage. Dazzled as he will be by the experience of the transcendent glory and power of God, he will feel that the only possible relationship that can exist between him and that great Lord is the relation of a servant; and in this stage he will bend all his efforts on the realisation of this *bhāva* in his heart and on making it manifest in his actions, all of which

he will perform as the service of his Lord. Gradually, as he practises this stage, he will become detached from worldly entanglements and will realise the teaching of the Gita that he has no concern with the fruits of action but only with the doing of it.

He will then become ready for the next stage which is called *'sakhya'*, friendship. The practice of *dāsya* will have given him a realisation of his relationship to *Bhagawān*, but now this relationship will begin to change in quality. Just as a servant, hired to look after a child, gradually comes to feel a love for that child that is only second to the love of the parents themselves, so the *sādhaka* will find that his service of God is becoming less and less of a duty and more and more a labour of love. He will discover, perhaps to his surprise, that Sri Krishna is not only the Lord of countless universes but is also the great Friend and Lover of the soul. And he will discover that this is so because the soul is not a separate thing from God, but is a portion of His very being. Friendship can only exist between beings that are akin in nature, and he will find that the friendship that has sprung up between him and Sri Krishna has its roots in the fact that he is a spark of that Light, the totality of which is Sri Krishna, a drop of that ocean of *Sacchidānanda* which in its entirety is the Supreme Himself. Because of the community of being there will spring up that community of feeling which is what constitutes friendship. Actions he will still perform, but, instead of their being motived by a sense of awe and fear, they will spring from the feeling of love that he is increasingly conscious of in his heart.

This brings him to the last stage, the stage that is called *ātmanivedana'*, the offering of the very soul itself to

Krishna. Words are quite inadequate to describe this stage. Just as the lover cannot bear the least separation but longs to mingle his very being with that of the beloved, so the soul, aflame with Divine love, longs to unite its very being with that of Shri Krishna. This is the state that has been symbolised and, alas, too often materialised, in the descriptions of the union of Radha and Krishna, but in reality it is beyond all words. It is an indescribable union in which the soul seeks to lose all its sense of separateness and unites itself to its Lover in utter self abandonment. It is indescribable by any metaphor, because all metaphors refer to the union of material things and this is a union of life with Life, of spirit with Spirit, a union in which the identity of the soul is utterly lost and yet in which its true identity is found for the first time and for ever. It is the state of which the Buddha said that the man who attained Nirvana neither existed nor ceased to exist; of which Christ said that "he who loseth his life shall find it"; and of which Sri Krishna said:— मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥ "Thou shalt come to me; I pledge thee My word, thou art dear to Me."

This, then, is the ninefold path of *bhakti,* a path which depends on no supernatural magic, but which leads easily and naturally from one step to the next until the *sādhaka* reaches the Goal. It calls for no blind faith in any external authority and rises above the sectarian disputes which have blackened the name of religion throughout the ages. The *sādhaka* is led gradually and naturally along the path of his own ever widening realisation until he achieves that supreme experience from which there is no return into ignorance.*

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BHAKTI SADHANA

The essence of *bhakti sādhanā* is the giving of the self to the Supreme. In order to do this thoroughly there must first be some knowledge of the nature of that Supreme. It will be noticed that it is not till the fourth chapter of the Gītā that the word *bhakta* occurs and that most of the references to *bhakti, bhajan,* etc., come still later in the book. This clearly shows that it is only when some degree of knowledge has been attained and some degree of capacity for controlled and selfless action has been acquired that *bhakti sādhanā* becomes effective. Apart from any book, it should surely be obvious that until a man knows something, even though little, of the nature of that Reality to which he is to give himself, the giving can hardly be effective, and, until he has learnt to control his actions, that giving can never issue in effective service, without which, giving is mere empty emotionalism.

The first step, then, is to gain some degree of knowledge as to the nature of the Supreme Reality. Obviously at this stage such knowledge cannot be more than partial, for the true knowledge will only come at the end of the Path; but some knowledge is essential if *bhakti* is to be effective.

The question will surely be asked as to how the knowledge ought to be obtained, and the answer is that it is to be obtained through the teachings of those whom the heart's instinct accepts as teachers, from the study of such books as the Gītā and, above all, from meditative thought about the nature of the world. This thought or meditation is indeed the real source of the knowledge, even

though, in certain stages, the guidance of a teacher will in nearly all cases be essential.

When the disciple has gained some insight into the nature of Reality, has realised, if only in a mental manner, that the Supreme Reality is of a Spiritual nature, that It pervades all things and is permanent while all else comes and goes, only then is he in a position to take the next step, which is that of offering himself in the service of that Reality.

In order to do that it is necessary to find some symbol of the Reality which can make a direct appeal to the heart of the disciple. Very few can give themselves to the Eternal, Formless, All-Pervading Being. What is required is some symbolic form to serve as focus for devotion and to draw out from the heart of the disciple that unselfish love which is the power by which he will tread the Path. This symbol may be the form of some great Teacher, whether of the past or of the present, one whose character and actions move the heart to an instinctive worship, one of whom the disciple can feel that to be united to Him can constitute the goal of all endeavour. The whole process should be a perfectly natural one. The Teacher in question should not be worshipped because other people worship Him or because books say that He was God Himself, for such a worship becomes strained and unnatural. It should be the heart's spontaneous love which asks no question as to whether he who draws that love be God or man. It does not matter who that Figure be or even whether He ever had historical existence, although it will certainly be easier if He is conceived of as having lived like us upon the earth. The one essential is that He should draw the soul in free spontaneous

worship. That is why some Vaisnavas have tried to separate the *mādhūrya* (loveliness) from the *aishwarya* or Lordship of Krishna, because they feel that Krishna should be loved for His own self alone and not for all the God-like powers He wielded· and that, too, is why some worship Rāma the most because he showed less superhuman powers.

One warning must be given. Though the disciple's Lord must be his All, must be the very God of Gods for him, yet he must take great care that this one-pointed love does not degenerate into the narrowness of sectarianism. Many go astray here for lack of knowledge and allow their feelings for one brightly shining Figure to breed intolerance and even hate for others, no less divine than Him who is their choice. It must always be remembered that no form whatever is in itself Divine. The Light by which it shines comes from one, the great *Ātman* and that Light shines impartially in all. He who allows his love for one to make him intolerant of others is treading, not the Path of Unity, but that of separation, and he may know that, whatever vision or blissful experience he may gain, he is travelling farther from, not nearer to, his Lord.

Having thus found one's object of devotion the disciple should make him the centre of his life. All acts should be performed for Him alone, all thoughts should centre round the one loved Figure. In the morning let him meditate upon his Lord and, dedicating himself in loving service, let him think what acts for Him he will perform during the day. At intervals during the press of work he should remind himself of Him for whom he works. Actions which cannot be thought of as serving Him should be abandoned and, at the day's end, he should reflect in his mind on the actions of the day and offer them to Him.

Any act of which he is ashamed to make an offering should be avoided on the following day.

All acts and thoughts should be referred to Him. When faced by any doubtful situation, think in your heart which action best will please Him. Make Him the conscience seated in your heart. Each act or thought sanctioned by Him will take you nearer to His being and thus, even in the midst of daily life, the Ladder will be climbed which leads to the Eternal.

Gradually, as he proceeds, the disciple will find his life centering more and more round the Divine Figure. He must now make an effort to see that Form in everyone and everything within that Form.

This is where many go astray for want of some preliminary knowledge. "Those who worship the Gods go to the Gods" says Krishna, those who worship Him, the All-pervading One, go whence there is no return. Those whose devotion is *merely* for some person attain that person, but their further path is blocked. It is only when the worshipped Form is like a window through which streams the one Eternal Light, the Light of Lights, that the devotion will carry the disciple to the great Goal. That is why the *Shāstras* so continually assert that the *bhakta* must see his Lord in all and all within his Lord.

Practising thus, the sense of difference between man and man, between the pleasant and the painful, between the holy and the worldly will be seen to vanish. The love which the disciple felt for the Divine Figure seated in his heart will now pervade the world, since everywhere and in all things that one loved Form is seen. And then, one day, the Soul's eye will be opened. Within that Form the disciple will behold the triple world with all its countless beings fused into unity in one unchanging Light. The

self is gone, nothing but Him remains and nothing is there that is not within His being. The love which burnt flame-like in the disciple's heart now flashes into world-embracing splendour, and that which lit his path and drew him upwards now sweeps like a vast tide throughout the world. Gone is the personal self of the disciple and, in its place, an all-embracing love shines on the storm-tossed ocean of the world that thereby its great sorrow may be lightened.

This is the Goal of all the *bhakta's* efforts. No heaven of purely personal emotion, no selfish bliss, forgetful of the sorrows of the world, can be the climax of the Path of Love. Not enjoyment of ecstatic bliss with Krishna, but His eternal service in the hearts of all must be the *bhakta's* goal, for He is all, and all are Him, and he who loves must pass from love of one to love of all. As long as even one of Krishna's myriad hearts is filled with sorrow there can be no rest; but everyone who strives to tread this Path quickens the coming of that glorious Day when the great sorrow of the world shall vanish and nothing more remain save Krishna's Bliss.

RADHA-PREM AS UNIVERSAL LOVE

Rādhā-prem has two senses. In the first place it signifies the love of Krishna for Rādhā and, in the second place, that of Rādhā for Krishna. Let us take them in order. What is the meaning of Krishna's love for Rādhā? Rādhā, as is well known signifies the *hlādinī shakti*, the *ānanda shakti* of Sri Krishna. The object of Sri Krishna's Brindaban *līlā* is to achieve meetings with Rādhā and to enjoy the bliss of her company. In plain words what Krishna desires is that his bliss should be manifested in the world. Everywhere and in every thing he wishes to see the shining forth of bliss. The selfishness of the world as represented by Rādhā's husband and relations places all sorts of obstacles in the path of their meeting but Krishna triumphs over all, so that time and again the meetings take place and here in this very world is seen the bliss of the Eternal.

On the other hand we have the fact of Sri Rādhā's love for Krishna. Rādhā's whole existence is bound up in that of Krishna. Everything she does is for him and without him she would die. Men seek bliss for themselves but never find it, for all bliss belongs to Krishna and can only be found in utter selfgiving to him.

It is thus seen that the two meanings of *Rādhā-prem* are the two sides of the cosmic process. On the one side there is the Divine will that bliss should be manifested and, on the other side, there is the self-giving, the making of everything to centre in Sri Krishna, so that the world may be the vessel of that bliss. Wherever men's hearts are filled with the hard rock of selfishness the Divine Union

cannot take place and in consequence the world is grey, loveless and sorrowful. But wherever the love of Krishna drives out all self and man is able to give himself utterly, there the desire of Krishna is fulfilled, Rādhā is his and the eternal bliss of *Parabrahman* is manifested here on earth.

For, as the Upanishad says: "All this is verily *Brahman.*" It is ignorance which makes us think that there are two worlds, this world and the world of *Brahman.* In reality all is one. Seen rightly this is Brindaban, this is Goloka, this is *sacchidānanda.* It is the delusion that our separate selves exist that makes this world the hell it is for most. Krishna is everything and everywhere and he is manifest wherever Rādhā is and self is not.

We are like men suffering from cataract of the eye; because of our blindness the world seems dark and gloomy. If we remove the selfishness that covers up the inner eye of wisdom we see that it was not the world that was dark but we ourselves. Now that our eye has cleared we see that all is light, light on the way-side grass, light on the forest trees, light dancing on the waves of the great ocean and above all, light in the cloudless sky where the eternal Sun shines in his stainless splendour.

This is the *Mahā-bhāva* which none but Radha ever knows. None else can ever know it, for only where all self has vanished like the flame of an extinguished lamp can it be manifest.

What is the Path that leads to this Goal? The path is that of love for Krishna, but where is Krishna? Like fire in the fire-sticks, like oil in *til,* like butter in milk, Krishna dwells in secret in the hearts of all. To seek him elsewhere is like trying to milk a cow from its horn or

trying to produce fire by worshipping the fire-sticks instead of using them. Krishna is in all and must be served in all. Then, when constant service has kindled the flame of love, that flame will consume all, even the sticks which gave it birth, and in place of you and me and others there will only be Krishna gloriously shining with Rādhā on his breast. The blue colour of Rādhā's cloth mingles with the blue tint of Krishna's body and the sun-like brilliancy of Krishna's clothes blends with the golden radiance of her limbs. Is it one figure or two? We cannot say; all that we know is that it is the Only Reality in all the triple world.

LOVE IN BUDDHISM

Before taking up the subject it is necessary to say a few words about a foolish notion that is unfortunately current in some quarters of this country. It is said that the Buddha, though an *avatāra* of Vishnu, was one who came in order to delude the Asuras by teaching false doctrines and to destroy them by leading them upon a wrong path. The authority for this view is sometimes said to be a certain verse in the Srimad Bhāgawata (1-3-24), but in that verse it is stated that He was the son of Anjana and born in the Kīkaṭa country. Since the historical Buddha is well-known to have been the son of Suddhodana and to have been born in the Lumbini Park near Kapilavastu it should be quite obvious that the writer of the verse in question either did not know what he was talking about or else was referring to some other person altogether. In either case it is clear that it is high time that this shameful doctrine should be utterly abandoned.

For who was the Lord Buddha? He was one who, ages before, had vowed to devote life after life to the perfecting of His character so that in the end He might be able to gain the Supreme Enlightenment and come forth as a Teacher of the Truth able to show the Way of Salvation to all suffering beings. And so, after countless lives of sacrifice, He was born as the son of King Suddhodana in what is now Nepalese territory. Renouncing the throne while yet a youth and leaving wife and child, He wandered forth into the jungles in search of that Truth which should save the world and, at last, after years of

arduous struggle and *tapasya,* He attained the *Sambodhi,* the Enlightenment. After this He devoted the remainder of His long life to teaching others the Truth that He had Himself perceived and this He did with such power and majesty that, like a great tide, Buddhism swept over the whole of India carrying all before it and, from India, went forth into all the quarters of the world.

It is surely a crowning example of the base ingratitude of humanity that One who had thus striven, life after life, for the welfare of others and Who had lit such a Light in the world that by Its rays countless millions have set foot upon the path to Salvation should have been forgotten *in the very country of His birth or, worse still, have been* cruelly slandered by saying that He came to deceive those to save whom He had again and again laid down His life.

Thus, even from the above summary, it can be seen that the very foundation of Buddhism is to be found in love, not the mere self-contained emotional rapture which is what so many seem to mean by the word, but a love which pours itself out ungrudgingly for the service of all and which is manifested in selfless action.

When we turn to the teaching of the Buddha we find the same lesson set forth. "Even as a mother loves her child, her only child, when ten have died, so should you be filled with love towards all creatures." This was the teaching He gave to His disciples and no grander or more explicit statement of the doctrine of love has ever been made. It is not a love which is restricted to this person or that person, to this country or that country, but one which includes all beings, human and non-human, in its all-embracing sweep. Observe too that it is no mere tepid warmth of benevolent feelings but a vivid love that can sacrifice itself utterly for the sake of the loved object

which, in this case, is all living beings. Love is a word that is frequently on our lips but none can contemplate so lofty a love as this and not realise how poor and loveless is his own life.

To feel one's own insufficiency is, no doubt, a good beginning but it is only a beginning. Love will not well up in our hearts simply by our sitting with folded hands praying for it to come. While it is true that we cannot give birth to love in our hearts by any mere act of will yet we can provide by our efforts a suitable soil in the shape of mental dispositions in which love can flower freely.

The ordinary man is in the habit of regarding only certain persons as the proper objects of his love. His outlook is limited to wife and child, to parents and friends; all others are 'outsiders', outside, that is, the sacred circle of those whom he considers to have a claim on his love. His heart is tied up in knots and though desolated with grief at the death of a son, the death of fifty thousand 'outsiders' in China leaves him more or less cold.

In order to loosen these knots of the heart, to plough up the soil, as it were, the Buddha recommended His disciples to practise a certain form of meditation known as the *Brahma Vihāra,* or Brahma-dwelling, so-called perhaps because by its aid the heart of the *sādhaka* is expanded till it dwells in the whole universe.

As a preliminary discipline the disciple is bidden to abstain from all killing of living beings and, "ashamed of roughness and full of mercy, he dwells compassionate and kind to all creatures that have life." After this he is instructed to perform the following exercise regularly.

"He lets his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thoughts of love and so the second and so the third

and so the fourth. And thus the whole wide world above, below, around and everywhere does he continue to pervade with thoughts of love, far-reaching, grown great and beyond measure."

"Just as a mighty trumpeter makes himself heard in all the four directions, even so of all things that have shape or life, there is not one that he passes by or leaves aside but regards them all with mind set free and deep felt love." *

Such a meditation, if regularly carried out with concentrated mind, has results of two sorts. In the first place, as described above, it operates on the heart of the *Sādhaka* himself, ploughing up its stony soil and breaking down the barriers which shut off the individual within the narrow circle of his own relations and friends.

In addition to this it has an actual positive result in the outer world as well. There is a direct connection between mind and mind, as direct as there is between matter and matter, and, as the *sādhaka* progresses in his efforts, as his mind becomes more and more capable of concentration, his outraying thoughts of love will directly influence an ever-widening circle, and so, since loving thoughts are parents of loving deeds, will be a silent source of inspiration to countless deeds of love of which he himself never knows anything. Thus, not by his own hands alone, but through the hands of others too, he will help to extinguish the fierce fires of hatred and anger that torment the world For, as the Buddha has elsewhere said; "Not by hatred does hatred come to an end; hatred ends by love alone. This is the eternal law."

Perhaps there will be some who will say that this love

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* *Tevijja Sutta of Digha Nikāya*

that is here taught is very fine but it is a love of humanity and not a love of God. Such an objection, however, reveals utter ignorance both of the nature of love and of the nature of God.*

The Shruti says; "not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear but for the sake of the *Ātman.*" Love is not a mere rapturous emotion. Love is self-giving, and to whom can the self be given but to that *Vāsudeva* who is in the hearts of all? Nowhere in all the worlds can a living being be found in whose heart *Vāsudeva* is not seated and none, however far he may wander, has ever or will ever set eyes on a single thing that is separate from Him, for *Vāsudeva is all.*

Since love is self-giving, all true love is love of *Vāsudeva,* whether He be called by that name or by some other, or, indeed, whether He be called by no name at all. It is the merest folly to suppose that there are various sorts of love or that love is not directed towards God simply because He is not referred to by one of the labels which are familiar to us. Love is one as *Vāsudeva* is one and surely, never in all the long history of mankind, has anyone exceeded the love which the Buddha practised and taught, a love which was poured out and is still being poured out alike on those who revile Him as an atheist or *'nāstika'* and on those who daily repeat in devotion *"Buddham sharanam gacchāmi."* It is for this great love united, as true love always is, with equally great wisdom, that never, in all its long history, has Buddhism persecuted the followers of other faiths nor added to the great burden of the world's sorrow by cruel treatment of the outcast and depressed.

* This was written for a Vaishnava periodical which was apt to stress the love of God as something different from this love of men.

And what of the Goal,—the goal towards which the Buddhist directs his steps? It is that same Goal, the one and only Goal that gleams fitfully from behind the veil of all creeds in all lands. Sometimes called *Nirvāna,* It is best left nameless, for It is beyond all names and all descriptions, being that One Reality from which, as the Shruti says, "speech and mind fall back unable to fathom It."

One special teaching must, however, be mentioned, for it is the crest jewel of Buddhism. It is not to be found in all forms of Buddhism because the Buddha was wise enough to suit His teachings to the varying capacities of his hearers and to impart His highest teachings only to those who were fit to receive them. Those, however, to whom He taught the *Mahāyāna,* the Great Career, set before themselves the sublime ideal of the *Bodhisattva* and perform the Great Renunciation, the renunciation of the Goal itself. The *Bodhisattva* is one who seeks no salvation for himself alone and cares for no selfish bliss to be enjoyed by himself while all his fellows are still whirled about in the torments of the world. Accordingly, the disciple who would tread this Path vows at the very outset that he will never seek salvation for himself but will devote himself to selfless working for the salvation of all. Then, when like his great Teacher, after many lives of effort and sacrifice, he wins to the Farther Shore and stands upon the very edge of *Nirvāna,* out of love and compassion for his suffering fellows, he renounces the bliss that he has earned with so much toil and works on to the end in order to make easier the path for those whose feet are weaker than his own.

Hard is this Path and many have thought it loveless because they have looked only at the stern discipline

which the disciple must impose upon himself and have missed the all-embracing love which pervades and ensouls the whole and which is directed, not towards the disciple himself but towards his suffering fellows. For himself, nothing but stern discipline and unceasing effort, but, for his fellow beings, unbounded love and compassion, the love of a mother for her only son when ten have died. This is the sublime teaching of the Lord Buddha. Let none revile that which is too high for him to understand, for greater love hath no man than this; that he gives up the bliss of salvation for his friend.*

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* Published in *Sankirtan* and *'East and West'*.

THE FOURFOLD PATH

(Sādhanā Chatuṣṭaya)

The *Brahmavidyā* is not like ordinary subjects, something that can be understood by purely intellectual study. That "from which the speech turns back, together with the mind, unable to comprehend," can obviously never be understood by the intellect alone, however acute and learned it may be. Certain other disciplines, disciplines that find no mention in our modern universities are absolutely essential if the study of the *Vedānta* is to be anything more than a matter of barren words, useful only to the scholar and the pandit.

A very old tradition has described the *sādhanā* or discipline for him who would gain the *Brahmavidyā* and tread the Path that leads to immortality as fourfold:—*viveka, vairāgya, shaṭ-sampatti* and *mumukshutva.* Some there are, it is true, who reject this tradition saying that it is only the view of Shankarāchārya, but, that it is not so, is clearly shown by the fact that the same disciplines are mentioned by the great Vaishnava Āchārya, Rāmānuja, in his *Sri Bhāshya.*

The truth is that the list of the four *sādhanās* is a very old one, far older than Shankarāchārya, and, though it is not the only such formulation, it sets forth in admirably brief form what are to be found in every religion worthy of the name, the essential requisites for one who wishes to tread the Path. Those who desire to may quarrel about names and substitute any others that they prefer, but he who disregards the things themselves does so at his peril for, without them, no treading of the Path is possible and

the unqualified aspirant will inevitably fall from the razor-edged Path and either smash himself on the rocks of sterile intellectual philosophy or become engulfed in the seething bog of uncontrolled emotionalism.

The first essential is *Viveka,* the power to discriminate between the real and the unreal, between the permanent and the transitory. It corresponds to the 'Right Views' (*samyag dṛṣhṭi*) that is the first step of the Noble Eightfold Path taught by the Buddha. Until the aspirant has learnt to distinguish between what is Eternal and what is transitory he cannot be in a position to pursue the former. The first essential in any course of study is to separate out the special object of study from the other phenomena with which it is associated. The *Brahmavidyā* is the knowledge of the Eternal and therefore strenuous efforts must be made to separate out what is eternal from the ever changing attributes with which it is associated in our experience.

It is not enough to say "Oh yes; God is eternal and the world is transient; or "the *Ātman* is undying, all else is subject to death;" and then to pass on as if *viveka* has been achieved. Mere words are useless; it is *perception* that is required.

The Eternal is present everywhere and in everything. In all things, from the evanescent flame of a match to the age-old peaks of the Himālaya, from the day-long life of the butterfly to the hundred year life of man, there are two aspects; an unseen Something that is eternal and the ever changing accidents of form. He who seeks the Eternal must identify himself with It, and, to do this, he must first learn to see the Eternal in all things.

In the outer world he must learn to discriminate between the eternal laws of nature and the passing forms

they govern. In the inner world he must distinguish between the ever-changing flux of sensations and the constant 'awareness' which illumines them; between his feelings and he who has the feelings; between his thoughts and he who is the thinker of them.

Even when he has isolated the self, the thinker, he must go on to separate out the accidents of individuality, the factors that make the thinker this or that individual self, from That which is eternal and is the same in all.

The ordinary man does just the reverse of all this. He loves to observe differences between things and to identify himself with the outer show of life. He is proud of belonging to such and such a race or caste or of having a highly trained intellect and he does not realise, what is really quite obvious, that all castes and races, all bodies and intellects, are temporary things which must sooner or later come to an end. Identifying himself with the transient, he makes himself transient and therefore treads the path of death. The Upanishads have termed such a man '*Ātma-han*', a slayer of the Self, because, seeing not the eternal *Ātman*, he identifies himself with the passing forms, and though in truth immortal, he goes "from death to death."

The *viveka* which is the opposite to this must not be a matter of occasional practice during periods of meditation, of an occasional mood when 'feeling philosophical'. It must, by constant, unrelaxing day-long practice, be made habitual so that it becomes as natural when enduring the boredom of waiting for a train as when seated in peaceful meditation on the banks of the Ganges, as much present when suffering the irritating presence of tiresome people as when enjoying the pleasant company of friends or the inspiring conversation of *sādhus*.

This leads us to the second qualification, *Vairāgya*. *It must not be supposed that any one of these four* *sādhanās* can be perfected by itself. All are necessary before any one of them can be brought to perfection. In fact, though there is a definite meaning in their sequence, these four *sādhanās* are not so much four steps of a ladder as the four intertwined strands of a rope which must be grasped as a whole by him who would climb to the top.

Vairāgya, detachment, is a word which conjures up in our minds a picture of ascetics naked and perhaps smeared with ashes, filled with disgust at the world, leaving wife and children, to go and dwell in burning grounds or remote Himālayan caves. But this is to confuse *vairāgya* with one of its occasional manifestations. *Vairāgya* does not mean disgust with the world nor an abandonment of duties and responsibilities, but *detachment* from the world and a detached performance of duties, and it can be as highly developed in the busy householder as in the care-free wandering ascetic.

Having learnt to distinguish that which is eternal from that which is temporary, the aspirant must resolutely turn away from all that is subject to death and change. This does not mean that he must run away from his social duties. It is not so easy as that, for the most fickle and changeable of all things is his own mind and that will go with him wherever he may go. Neither does it mean that he should brood incessantly on all the disgusting and painful elements of life. The disgusting sides of life are not more real or lasting than the beautiful and inspiring aspects. The majestic ocean is as much a part of the world as the ugly and evil-smelling drain, and to meditate continually on the evil and disgusting, though it may occasionally be useful in special circumstances, is a

thoroughly unsatisfactory attitude and one which is far removed from that balance which, as the Gita says, is the very essence of *yoga* समत्वम् योग उच्येत.

True *vairāgya* consists, not in the contemplation of decaying corpses and such like sights, but in an inner detachment from all things that are temporary, from pleasant things no less than from painful ones. The ordinary man feels a violent attraction to pleasant experiences and an equally violent repulsion from painful ones. The *Vairāgī* is one who sees that both pleasure and pain are feelings which serve certain purposes in evolution and who refuses to allow his inner self to be attracted or repelled by them. He indentifies himself with the witnessing consciousness (साक्षिचैतन्य) which is the same in pain as in pleasure, and he allows the varied experiences of life to unroll before him like the pictures of a cinematograph show, learning from all but attaching himself to none.

It is this inner detachment which is essential, and the aspirant can acquire it while fulfilling the ordinary duties of life better than by going off to dwell in caves and burning grounds. When life brings pleasant experiences to him he should check his natural tendency to rush out and embrace those pleasures and to cling to them desperately when, in the natural course of things, they depart from him. When, on the other hand, painful experiences are his lot, he must check the tendency to shrink away in fear. Practising constantly in this manner, every little experience of life will become a step in the ladder which leads to the Goal, and, with each success, however partial, he will find himself nearer to that utter detachment from pleasure and pain which constitutes the

crown of *vairāgya* and is the habitual attitude of him who is established in the Eternal.

The next requirement is what is termed '*shat sampatti*,' the 'six endowments'. It consists of six mental powers, *shama, dama, uparati, titikshā, shraddhā* and *samādhāna.* They are counted as one because they can be taken as a whole to signify the various aspects of mental control, that mental discipline which is absolutely essential for the aspirant.

Shama signifies the calming of the mind and is the first on the list because, until the mind is calm and peaceful, it is quite impossible to establish any effective control over the senses. The mind is their king, and, if it is not controlled, all attempt at piecemeal control of the individual senses is doomed to failure like the attempt to control a swarm of bees without reference to their queen. If, however, the queen bee be induced to settle down quietly, the whole swarm will settle and come into control.

Shama is therefore followed by *dama* which signifies the control of the senses themselves. It should be noted, however, that it is not the killing of the senses by fanatical austerities but their rational control that is required. For a man with a strong will it is easy to deaden the senses by severe treatment of them, but that is a mistaken way of proceeding and one which impoverishes instead of enriching the spiritual life.

The body and its senses must not be damaged and weakened, for they are the instruments through which alone the soul can act upon this plane of consciousness. They were evolved, as the *Sānkhya* truly teaches, to serve the purposes of the Soul or, as the *bhakti* school would prefer to state it, their purpose is to be used for the service of

God and not for the sake of mere enjoyment. They must, however, be brought into thorough subordination to the mind and never allowed to carry the aspirant away, despite his better judgment. Their natural tendency to run after such objects as give them pleasure must be restrained and only such activities permitted as are approved of by the conscience-controlled mind.

The next requirement is *uparati* which means a turning back from enjoyment (*rati*). When the mind and senses have been brought into control, a further step has to be taken. Even the pleasure seeker will be wise to practise some degree of self control as, otherwise, many pleasures will be interfered with by the unruly nature of his senses. But much more is demanded of the aspirant to the *Brahmavidyā*. Having mastered the previous steps, he must resolutely turn his mind away from the desire for enjoyment *as such*.

Enjoyment, in one form or another, is the aim of life for most people and even many who fancy they are treading the Path have in reality only substituted the desire for more lasting and more intense enjoyments, either of a 'heavenly' or of a '*yogic*' sort, for the common-place enjoyments of ordinary men. Desolating as the idea may seem, the aspirant must turn his back on the very idea of enjoyment and no longer allow it to serve in any way as the motive for his acts and thoughts. In its place he must substitute the ideal of service, the desire to serve that Eternal Reality which is worshipped under so many names and forms, the undying Krishna whose dwelling place is in the hearts of all.

Let none quibble and say that this, too, is a form of enjoyment. Supreme bliss is indeed to be found in the service of Krishna but only for him who seeks to give him-

self in service and by no means for him who seeks the bliss for its own sake. "He who seeketh his life shall lose it but he who loseth his life for My sake shall find it . . ."

Titikshā, the endurance of the 'pairs of opposites,' comes next upon the list.* The aspirant who has turned back from all desire for his own enjoyment is faced, like all men, with the fact that there is much in the universe that is not pleasant. Heat and cold, gain and loss, friendship and enmity, honour and dishonour; these are the warp and woof of his and all men's experience. The ordinary man's reaction to them is to strive to do away with the unpleasant members of these pairs and to retain only the pleasant ones. But such striving is based on ignorance, ignorance of the nature of all cosmic manifestation. Wherever there is movement, wherever there is manifested life, there must be two opposed forces. Action and reaction must take place on all levels of manifested being, and to seek to have life without the pairs of opposites, is the merest folly.

One of the things that every aspirant must learn is to cease beating his wings fruitlessly against the eternal laws of Nature. Instead of superstitiously wishing that the Laws which rule the Cosmos will be set aside for his special benefit, he must seek to understand them, and having understood, to co-operate.

In this particular case he must learn to understand the fundamentally dual nature of all manifestation and movement. Instead of feebly wishing that unpleasant aspects

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* There are some who practise what is known as *'Panchāgni tāpa',* the practice of sitting between four fires with the blazing sun overhead as the fifth The real five fires are, however, the fires of the five senses and the true ascetic is he who sits serenely in the nine-gated city of the body, unaffected by their burning flames.

of life should be taken from him, he must centre his being in that part of himself that is unchanging, unmoving, the '*sthānu*' which is beyond the pairs of opposites. From that vantage point he must watch with calm detachment the ebb and flow of the cosmic tides manifesting in all things, from the pleasure and pain of his own everchanging mental states to the movements of the nations and even of the worlds themselves as they circle round the Central Sun.

This, and not mere stoic indifference to heat and cold is the true *titikshā*, and, though it is much harder to attain, yet, because it is based on knowledge instead of on mere will-power, its possessor will be able to stand firm amid the crash of worlds in ruin while the mere stoic is carried away in the rushing waters of disaster.

Shraddhā, 'Faith', the fifth 'endowment', is another requisite that is often misunderstood All over the world the creed-mongers demand of their followers a blind belief in the doctrines set forth in their particular scripture and in the unique divinity of the particular teacher they profess to follow, in the particular God to whose cult they are devoted.

Such beliefs, based as they are on ancestral habit, emotional preference or mere intellectual opinion, are superstitions, for it is the essence of superstition that a belief is held without reference to evidence and experience. Such beliefs can only be maintained by shutting the eyes to facts or by mutilating a part of one's being. Therefore it is that the blind believer can never rest in calm confidence in his belief but must always seek the strength that comes from numbers, and, if that support is not naturally forthcoming, he will seek to coerce others to his way of thinking that thereby the doubts of his own heart may be silenced. Fanaticism is the twin brother of supersti-

tion, and if any man finds himself wishing to coerce another to his way of thought or to his particular type of belief in God, he may know for certain that his belief is not truly held and that the heresies he seeks to destroy in the minds of others are in reality the doubts which are lurking in his own inmost heart.

We have seen what *shraddhā* is not, and it is now time to state what it is. True *shraddhā* is the dim reflection in the mind and heart of the aspirant of that *knowledge* which is already present in the soul. All knowledge is present in the Soul. If it were not, there could be no teaching at all, for there can be no certain knowledge of anything which is different from oneself, nor can any knowledge be considered as final except the knowledge that is direct and immediate.

But, just as the power and bliss of the Soul are veiled through its association with a physical body and a personality, so is its knowledge veiled by having to be expressed through the limitations of a physical brain. And yet, just as whatever bliss we have in our experience, whatever power we are able to manifest in our lives, are but minute fractions of the bliss and power of the Soul, so is it true that whatever knowledge we possess is the inherent knowledge of the Soul, though veiled and distorted by our material limitations.

This knowledge is reflected in our hearts in the form of intuitions of the Truth, intuitions which the aspirant must learn to purify and separate out from the mass of mere opinion and inherited or acquired prejudice, as the swan is fabled to separate out the milk from the water with which it has been mixed.

Certainly it is not always easy to distinguish the true intuition from the voice of instinctive prejudice and

lurking desire. But when was it ever said that the Path, the razor-edged Path, is an easy one? It is only possible to distinguish with certainty when the whole personality has been disciplined and controlled by the constant practice of the previous *sādhanās* and when the distracting voice of desire has been reduced to silence. Nevertheless, the Light of intuition in his heart is the only light that can guide the aspirant along the Path. If he cannot see It, he must go on purifying and disciplining his mind until he can, for without it, no Guru, no scripture, no psychic experiences or visions can be of use, and he whose own lamp is not lit must remain in darkness even though all around him is blazing Light.

Shraddhā, then, has two stages First, there must be *the effort to purify the heart so* that the Light of intuition may shine forth clearly. Secondly must come the *effort to subordinate all else to* that Light. Wherever It shines, all else must give way to it. The aspirant must cling faithfully to his intuition, cling to it with all his being and allow neither religious tradition nor social custom, neither *emotional preference nor intellectual* opinion, to come between himself and its Light. One thing he may be sure of, and that is that each time he follows the dim Star within him, that Star will grow in brightness until it has become the resplendent Light of Knowledge, shining like ten thousand suns.

The next and last of the six 'endowments' is *Samādhāna* or mental balance, a word which may be taken as equivalent to *Samādhi* as that word is used in the Gītā (Chapter 2, verse 54) and in the eightfold Path of the Buddha. It is the state of the *sthita prajña,* the state in which the heart is turned away from its attachments, and "free from anxiety among pains, indifferent amid

pleasures," is poised on the edge of the *Atman,* gazing in devotion on that *Atman,* thinking the world well lost so that the *Atman* be gained.

The description of this state is so well-known from the clear account given in the Gitā that it would be unnecessary to say anything more were it not for the common notion that *samādhi* means sitting in a trance, oblivious of one's surroundings, insensible even if a sharp instrument be thrust into the body. Such trance states certainly exist but, in themselves, they are of no value. The true *samādhi* is something quite different. It is the condition in which the self is, as stated before, poised on the edge of the *Atman,* with the mind (and body) held in perfect balance, ready to be used at any moment as a perfect instrument for the service of that *Atman* which is One in the hearts of all.

Unlike the trance states with which it is popularly confused, and which are matters for caves and mountain jungles, this *samādhi* is one which can be, and must be, as much present in action as in meditation. A *samādhāna* which is dependent on external peace and quiet is an imperfect one, and it must be developed and strengthened till, amid the clashing strife of Kurukshetra, the aspirant can maintain the same unruffled poise as in the calm peace of a forest hermitage. Only when this is possible has *samādhāna* been achieved.

Lastly, we come to the fourth of the main qualifications, *mumukshutva* or desire for liberation. Primarily, this is not so much a further qualification to be acquired when the others have been perfected so much as an attitude which should pervade and motivate all the efforts which are set forth under the other heads. It refers to

the motivation of the whole long struggle, the end for which all should be pursued. Many men submit themselves to arduous disciplines and pour forth their lives in strenuous effort all for the sake of some finite goal. But, अन्तवत्तु फलं तेषाम् "temporary are all such fruits," temporary, for nothing is enduring save the Supreme Eternal, That which is "undivided among beings, though seeming to be divided." All other gains are of but brief duration and are lost again inevitably as the Cosmic Wheel turns through the unresting Cycles in never-ending change.

> "Only, while turns this Wheel invisible,
> No pause, no peace, no staying-place can be;
> Who mounts may fall, who falls will mount; the spokes
> Go round unceasingly."

As long as man clings to his separate 'self', so long must he whirl and suffer in the restless tides of sorrow, so long must he be bound by the limitations of his personality, be he king or be he slave, be he saint or be he sinner. Only in the Eternal can man achieve immortality. Therefore the aspirant must seek to liberate himself from all attachment to personal gain, from all desire for separate personal existence. Passionately must he seek to strip himself of all selfhood, not because his lot in life is an unhappy one, but because all separation, all selfhood is ultimately unreal and only in the stainless Light of the Eternal can the freedom and peace of Immortality be attained.

This then, is the preliminary *mumukshutva,* the constant effort to hold fast to the Eternal alone. But there is a further stage, and when, after many lives of struggle, the Wondrous Light shines forth; when the flickering candle of self is swallowed up in the blazing sunlight of

the Self, there comes a sudden pause. The river of his separate life is about to vanish into the Shoreless Sea, nay, it has already vanished as far as any sense of separateness is concerned. Suddenly, as he takes one last look at the myriad forms of the world of sorrow that he is about to leave forever, he is struck by a terrible and wondrous vision.

Within all those struggling forms, agonising upon the cross of matter, bathed in the blood of many wounds, he sees his Self, the Beloved, gazing piteously from behind pain-glazed eyes, feebly calling for a help that, drowned in the dark waters of ignorance, It scarcely can believe to exist.

Can he ignore that pitiful appeal? Shall he allow his candle to merge and be lost forever in the Sun, blazing beyond the Darkness, or shall he not rather turn back once more and make of his disciplined and enlightened individuality a focus through which may shine not the small light of self, but the Great Splendour of the One Eternal, shining in the darkness to lighten the weary path of men?

Shall the lover rest while his Beloved is in bondage? Though the bonds be but those of illusion, yet are they none the less real to those who sleep and dream. Let him who has trodden thus far turn aside from the facile arguments which would seek to persuade him that since he is the ever-free *Átman*, there is no more to be done. Let him make the final sacrifice of the self which seeks its own bliss to that Self which is One in all. Let him tread with firm courage the Path of the *true Mumukshu,* of him who seeks the liberation of all, until the dawning of that mystic 'Day' when the last spark of Spirit is freed from the embraces of matter and, like the phantom figures

of a dream, Matter and Spirit lose their separate being, transcended in the glorious Light of That which has no name.

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* First published in *Kalyan*, Gorakhpur.

MUKTI

The idea of *Mukti* plays a large part in all the systems of Hindu philosophy and, in fact, by most Hindus '*Mukti*' or some synonymous word is considered to represent the ultimate Goal of life. Unfortunately sectarian disputes have led to a great deal of confusion due to the fact that the various schools (*sampradāyas*) have identified the word with the attainment of some particular state conceived by them to be the supreme Goal. Thus we read of five sorts of *mukti*. Some consider these to be five stages on the road to the genuine and final *mukti* while others appear to consider them to be five independent and separate sorts of *mukti* of which a man may have whichever he prefers. Such thinkers consider the state of *mukti* to be one of nearness (*sāmīpya*) or similarity of appearance (*sādrshya*) to God and conceive of the *mukta* soul as inhabiting one of the various eternal worlds (*nitya loka*) which are held to exist outside the limits of the *Brahmānda*.

Some other schools of thought on the other hand identify *mukti* with a state which is sometimes described as absorption of the soul in Brahman, sometimes as the soul's becoming Brahman, and sometimes as a state of knowledge that there is in reality no difference between the soul and Brahman.

Other schools, again, apparently accepting these last mentioned views as being the true description of *mukti* and, having no wish to be absorbed in the Supreme Brahman, have abandoned *mukti* altogether as the goal of life and, while admitting that such a state exists and can

be had if desired, say that it is not a desirable state at all and should be avoided.

I do not propose to quote texts in support of any of these views because if one searches carefully enough one can find texts in support of almost any view and it becomes merely a matter of which particular texts one chooses to quote. In fact, the confusion which has arisen in people's minds as a result of listening to the diverging views of the various sects seems to be mainly due to the fact that, as stated above, each school tries to identify the state of *mukti* with some particular state which they consider to be the most desirable. As men have different desires they naturally consider different states to be desirable and so we get people saying that *mukti* is this, that or the other thing and some saying that it is not a thing to be striven for at all.

If we turn to the dictionary we find that the word *mukti* comes from the root *'much'* (मुच) and means loosening, freedom, deliverance, and reference to the Gita will show that there at least it is always used in the sense of freedom from bondage, from sin or from attachment. In fact it is quite obvious that freedom must *always* mean freedom from some bondage or other and so, in order to see what the word *mukti* really signifies we must first see what it is that binds men.

Some would perhaps answer that it is sin that binds us and that therefore *mukti* means deliverance from sin. I do not wish to dispute this but must point out that it is not a very useful answer because, in the first place, men are not agreed as to what constitutes sin and, secondly, even supposing that we were all agreed that to kill an animal is a sin, it is not at all obvious how I am actually 'bound' by killing a dog.

A better, because deeper, answer would be that we are bound by the well-known 'six enemies', *kāma, krodha, lobha, moha, mada* and *mātsarya,* but, if we look a little further we shall see that in reality all these may be reduced to one, namely, desire, *kāma,* from which all the others spring, for as the Gita says: कामात्सं जायते क्रोधः "from desire springs anger, etc."

That we are all bound by desire is quite obvious to all. We are compelled to do the various acts we perform, not because any other person forces us to do them but because we desire to do them, and, though we may often like our desires, yet we are in bondage to them all the same. A golden chain is as much a bondage as an iron one! The desire for enjoyment in some form or other is truly the great bondage and wisely has Sri Krishna instructed us to kill this enemy, so difficult to be overcome (*shatrum durāsadam*). Until desire for enjoyment is slain no man can be free no matter what airs he may give himself and no matter how many *shāstras* he may quote. He may spend his days in worship, marking his body with conspicuous *tilakas* or he may abandon his *shikhā* and *sūtra* and wander about, a homeless *sannyāsī,* but *as long as one spark of desire for enjoyment is burning in his heart he is not free.* Not only that, as long as he is not trying to subdue his desires he is not even trying to be free, whether he calls himself a *bhakta,* a *yogī* or a *jñānī.* It is no good for us to say that *jñāna* will burn up the desires nor that the tears of *bhakti* will wash them away. Neither *jñāna* nor *bhakti* can spring up in our hearts as long as they are polluted by desire for enjoyment just as one cannot see the reflection of one's face in a dirty mirror. To cry for freedom while clinging hard to one's chains is mere folly and it is scarcely less foolish to sit waiting for some magical deliverance to be

bestowed upon us by *Bhagawān* or by some *Mahātmā*. Such miracles may happen or they may not happen. There are different opinions on the matter and I do not wish to criticise anyone's opinion. One thing, however, I do know and that is that I personally have never *seen* anyone attain any degree of spiritual advancement except after long and strenuous effort. There may, of course, be cases to the contrary. If anyone knows of such and is willing to trust himself to their example that is his responsibility. If one comes to a river and wishes to get across, it is not much good sitting down and waiting for a miracle to happen. Of course the river *may* suddenly dry up or an earthquake may divert its course. It is, however, apt to be quicker and surer to swim across, and, if one can't swim, then the best thing to do is to learn. Some will say "take a boat". Very good advice indeed if there happens to be a boat available and if you are sure of the boatman, but, unfortunately, only too many of the boatmen who ply for hire upon the hither bank of the *virajā* river seem to be doing so without any proper qualifications. They have never been as far as the other bank themselves and usually, having taken the passenger's money, they drop him in the water in the middle where, unless he can swim, he is certainly drowned. Clearly then, it is best to be able to swim.

It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the various ways which have been taught to help us to conquer our desires. It will be sufficient to say briefly that we must not merely suppress the desires as they arise but must cut away the very root of desire which is what some call *'dehātmabuddhi'*, the identification of oneself with one's body (or mind), others call *ahankāra* or egoism, and still

others call *bahirmukhyatā,* being turned outward, *i.e.,* away from God. Call it what you like, the name doesn't matter; it must be destroyed under whatever name it may be known.

To return, however, to the consideration of *mukti,* it must be clear from the above analysis that freedom from bondage must be everyone's aim. As long as a man is a slave he can accomplish nothing whatever that is worth doing. At each moment his chains will impede his action. It is not a question of wanting *mukti* or not wanting it. Without *mukti* nothing can be done at all.

One reason why some people reject the idea of *mukti* is because they consider it too negative. This is quite sound. Merely to be free from bondage cannot in itself be the final Goal. Freedom in itself has not much meaning. It is merely the absence of the hindrances which stood between me and my goal. Its value depends entirely upon the use it is put to. One man may use his freedom merely to enjoy himself lazily by sleeping in the sun while another uses his for the service of his fellow-beings. There is all the world of difference between these two men but freedom is equally necessary to both. It is useless to say "I do not want *mukti,* I wish only to serve God."* You may not *want* mukti but you must *have* it if you really wish to serve Him. If a man asks you to take him as your servant and you find that he is ignorant, greedy, dishonest and incompetent you will reject his application or, if out of kindness or pity, you do give him a post, you will be forced to spend a great deal of your time in correcting his mistakes and in guarding against his dishonesty.

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* This is a common statement among some Vaishnavas.

Similarly it is not by mere asking for it that a man can obtain the post of a servant of God. He must first fit himself for it. Let no man think that he can perform *Bhagawat sevā* while his heart is full of desire, anger, greed or ignorance. It is true that such a man may be used by *Bhagwān* just as He used Duryodhan to destroy the Kauravas or may use a river to overwhelm a town, but that is not the same as consciously performing His service. In order to be servants of God it is absolutely essential that we should strive with all our might for *mukti, mukti* from the fetters of our enemies, anger, greed and infatuation and particularly from the father of them all—desire. If anyone should doubt this let him read Gita, Chapter 12, verses 13 to 20 and he will see what sort of qualities are expected by Sri Krishna of His *bhaktas* who are "dear to Him."

All are familiar with the ritual purity that is required of the *pujāri* in a temple. He must bathe several times, wash his hands and feet before entering, abstain from certain foods, abstain from touching certain sorts of men and, in short, must take elaborate steps to maintain a scrupulous bodily purity. If he cannot do all this he cannot do the *sevā* in the temple. If all this elaborate outer purity is required for a paid *pujāri* it is surely clear that at least an equal inner purity is required for the real *sevak.*

It must be a war to the death between us and our desires, for if we do not kill them they will certainly kill us and that, not once, but many times. True it is that Krishna is with us but, though He will hold the reins and guide our chariots, He will not raise a weapon: the fighting must be done by us.

Thus it is seen that the great question is not whether we want *mukti* or not, for all need it, nor need we waste time discussing what *mukti* is like; we shall know that well enough when we get it. The real question is how we are going to set about getting it and, above all, what use we propose to make of our freedom when it has been attained:

मुक्ता अपि लीलया विग्रहं कृत्वा भगवन्तं भजन्ते।

"The liberated, also, making for themselves a form by *'līlā'*, serve the Lord.*

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* First published in *Sanātan Dharma,* Benares.

GURU-TATTVA IN THE BHAGAWATA

दुःखोदर्केषु कामेषु जातनिर्वेद आत्मवान् ।
अजिज्ञासित मद्धर्मो गुरुं मुनिमुपाव्रजेत् ॥
तावत्परिचरेद्भक्तया श्रद्धावान् अनसूयकः ।
यावद्ब्रह्म विजानीयान्मामेव गुरुमादृतः ॥

Srimad Bhāgawata, 11|18|38-39.

"The self-controlled man who has been disgusted with desires which always give rise to sorrow, but who has not made enquiries into my *dharma* should betake himself to a *Muni guru.*

Until he has knowledge of the *Parabrahma* he should with devotion, faith, and without criticism serve the *Guru* as myself."

In these two verses are set forth in brief the type of man who can profitably seek a Guru, the object for which he should go to a Guru, the sort of Guru that is required, the nature of the Guru Himself and the service that should be given him. I will consider them in turn

Until a man has reached a certain stage of development by his own efforts it is very little use for him to seek for a Guru. Of the vast army of 'gurus', a very large number are charlatans who are simply desirous of acquiring disciples for the sake of their own fame and profit. Of those that are genuine, comparatively few have anything to impart, and even they have such diverse views to set forth that the would-be disciple knows not in which direction to turn. *Jñāna, Yoga* (of half a dozen different sorts), *bhakti* (towards a dozen different objects) are all

set forth by some 'guru' or other and the unfortunate aspirant, confused in the babel of voices, either gives up the search in despair or else trusts to luck, and, shutting his eyes, takes the first one that comes to hand.

But all this is his own fault since he has not taken the steps which should qualify him to be a disciple and is utterly unfit to recognise the Guru even if he meets him. Some *shāstras* give long lists of the qualities a disciple should possess, but the *Bhāgawata* goes straight to the heart of the matter and lays down the essential qualifications as two, detachment from the enjoyment of the senses (*vairāgya*) and self-control.

There is a foolish notion current that any man has only got to go to some competent Guru and the latter will push him into a first-class compartment in the mukti-mail and then he will sit playing cards till he automatically reaches his destination. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The disciple must tread the Path by his own efforts, and no Guru, however great a *Mahātmā* he may be, can do more than show him the Way.

But we haven't got to that point yet as we are still concerned with the search for the Guru. Before the Guru can be found in the flesh he must first be found in the disciple's heart and it is useless to expect to hear His voice while busy listening all the time to the voices of desire. Only when they are to a large extent stilled and when this wandering mind has been brought into control will it become possible to hear the voice of the Guru in the heart. It may be asked how one is to take these preliminary steps without the teaching of a Guru to help one, but the fact is that all that is necessary at this stage has been set forth by hundreds of teachers and written in a thousand books. The Gita, in particular, is quite clear enough and quite

definite enough to enable anyone who is in earnest, (and he who is not in earnest had better go back to his ordinary pursuits, for he will get nothing on this Path), to discipline himself and achieve a measure of *vairāgya*.

This all-important work must be done by the aspirant for himself and then he will begin to hear his Guru speaking within him in the voice of conscience. Constantly listening for and obeying that Voice, it will grow clearer day by day and then he will be in a position, when he meets the Guru in the flesh, to recognise his voice by its identity with the Voice within.

This is the only method to avoid mistakes and even disasters in the choice of a Guru. Vast learning, genuine renunciation, great power of exposition, psychic powers—none of these by themselves, or taken together, afford any indication that the possessor is one's Guru. Only when his voice echoes the Voice in the heart can one know for certain that the outer Guru is found, and, whether he be in the body of a householder or a *sannyāsī*, a man or a woman, a Brāhman or a Sūdra, the disciple may and should offer to him body, mind and soul without fear of disaster and without holding anything back.

Till then it is useless to tour the country in search of *mahātmās*. Rather should he go on with his duties, using the teaching which is available for all to improve his character, to control his unruly mind and turn himself away from the attachment to sense enjoyment. Above all, let him avoid the snares of those who claim to be *Avatāras* or allow their disciples to put forward such claims for them, of those who flatter him on his spirituality and of those who promise speedy results, psychic experiences or an easy path to those who become their disciples.

This is not the place to enquire in detail what Krishna terms मद्ध म It is sufficient here to say briefly that it is the *dharma* in which the aspirant offers himself body, mind and soul to *Bhagawān,* and, without thought of personal gain, dedicates his thoughts, words and actions to the service of that One Lord seated in the hearts of all beings. This is the *dharma* for which the Guru should be sought. Not for the fear of the world should the Path be sought but for the love of Him whose Path it is, of Him who is Himself the Path, the Treader of the Path and the Beloved who is waiting at the Goal.

The *Bhāgawata* specifies that the Guru should be a *muni* and it is desirable to enquire into the significance of that term. It does not mean a man of any particular *āshrama,* a man wearing a particular dress or living in any particular outward manner. The word *muni* comes from the root मन् and signifies a thinker or knower, one, that is, who *knows* Krishna and can teach from his own *knowledge* and not from what is written in books. If book knowledge would do, it is available for all, and, if mere exposition of books is all that is required, there are ten thousand pandits and scholars ready to do it. What is wanted is direct knowledge, the *aparoksha anubhuti* in the heart, and he who has that knowledge is a *muni,* not he who is "without fire and without rites," nor, it may be added, he whose words are sweet but conduct bitter, who weeps for Krishna but loves not his fellow men.

True it is that such *munis* are hard to find, first because they are few in number, and secondly because they hide themselves from the eyes of people, fearing the superstitious reverence which men pay to the great. Nevertheless the world is never without them and when the disciple is ready the Guru appears. If no human form

were available *Bhagawān* Himself would appear as Guru. For, as we shall see, the Guru is really the *shakti* of *Bhagawān* and the appearance of the Guru to the *fit* disciple is as certain and as natural a law as the secretion of milk when the calf is born. But the disciple must be truly ready. We do not seek a university professor to teach us the alphabet and it is equally useless to seek a great *mahātmā* when what we need is the A. B. C., of self-control. Even were he to come forward he could be of little use, for the unprepared disciple would not be in a position to take advantage of his wisdom.

The fact is that the path to the Guru is an internal path. Not by wandering about the country but by disciplining one's heart does one approach his feet, and, when ready, his appearance is certain. For in truth, the only Guru is Bhagawān himself. बन्दे कृष्णं जगद्गुरुम् or, as Sri Krishna puts it in the Bhāgawata,

आचार्यं माम् विजानीयान्नावमन्येत कर्हिचित् ।
न मर्त्यबुद्ध्यासूयेत सर्वं देवमयो गुरुः ॥

भा० ११।१७।८७

"One should realise the teacher to be myself. Never should one find faults in him thinking him to be a mortal, for in Him are all the gods."

Knowing, as everyone at least in theory does, that Sri Krishna resides in the hearts of all, even of the meanest, it should be easy to see that there is no possibility of the Guru's failing to appear when the disciple is prepared, for seated in the heart, Sri Krishna sees every act and every thought of man, even those hidden thoughts which are unknown to us ourselves. No effort, not even the slightest, is unnoticed by His all-seeing eye and such is His compassion that He will not allow a moment to elapse if His

appearance can do good, not harm. For it should always be remembered that it is one thing to desire a Guru to come and help us and quite another thing to be ready to be helped by that Guru, just as it is one thing to desire learning and another to be ready to take advantage of the lectures in a college.

The Guru is one and the same for all.

मन्नाथः श्रीजगन्नाथो मद्गुरुः श्रीजगद्गुरुः ।

But there is a danger lurking here on which many disciples and not a few so-called *gurus* have been shipwrecked. The disciple is not to regard the Guru as a mortal, but this does not mean that the Guru should receive a superstitious worship from his *chelās*. Misunderstanding of this has been responsible for innumerable disasters. The Guru is not the body. The body of the Guru was born and will assuredly die. To treat the mortal as immortal is to shut our eyes to facts and to fall into the bog of superstition, not to tread the Path of Light. It is the *shakti* manifesting through the Soul that is the same as Krishna, not the body and personality through which it manifests. The window through which the sun is shining is not the sun itself and the warning against regarding the Guru as a mortal means that the disciple should look at his Guru, not with the fleshly eyes which perceive a mortal body, but with the eye of knowledge which sees the immortal Soul.

Just as the sunlight is one though shining through many windows, so the Soul is one though manifesting in many bodies. It is that *Atman* which is the true Guru and not the passing form in which it manifests itself, and it is this knowledge that disciple must cling to with all his being.

If he looks with the eye of flesh he will see naught but a perishable body, naught but a man whose knowledge, great or small, is limited like his own, and like his own, liable to mistakes. He will see his own Guru as different from other Gurus, and, seeing difference, will "go from death to death." If, however, he looks with the inner eye he will see the light of the one *Atman, the radiance* भर्गः of that adorable *Savitar,* which, as the *Gāyatrī* teaches us, is the Guru who guides our hearts.

That light is the one Guru of all. It is never to be considered as a mortal, but should be served with faith and devotion until the Goal is reached. It is to be considered as *Bhagawān* Himself because the Light and Its Source are one, and it is of that Light and not of any man that it is said,

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णु गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः

Nevertheless, just as the *āsana* of a Guru, though but a dead piece of woollen cloth, is treated with respect *because it is his āsana,* so the human form in which, for the disciple, that Light has manifested, is to be served with reverence because it is the *sinhāsana* on which that Light is enthroned. *Vāsudeva* is everywhere but He is specially worshipped in the *Sāligrāma.* So is the Guru everywhere and yet specially to be worshipped in that form through which, for a particular disciple, the Light is seen to shine.

Into great darkness will fall that disciple who thinks that such and such a person is his Guru, but into an even greater darkness will fall that Guru who fancies that it is to him that worship and service are given. Such a 'guru', instead of being a window through which can shine the Light, is a thick curtain shutting it off from his

disciples, a blind leader of blind followers who will fall into the pit, अन्धेन नियमाना यथान्धाः ।

To him who is seeking a Guru I would say: give up your restless wanderings and searchings in the world. No mortal can ever be your Guru. The Guru is of no family, no caste, no race and no sex. Seek Him in your heart, for He is there already, and, if you cannot hear His voice within, you will never hear it anywhere else. When you have found Him and served Him in your heart He will Himself find you in outer form as well, and then, when you have satisfied yourself that the two Voices are the same, you can render up your very soul in worship until the Goal is reached, the *Parabrahman,* in Which is neither *Guru* nor *shishya,* neither teaching nor taught.

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THE AIM OF LIFE

Although men are usually quite convinced of their superiority to animals, the grounds for that conviction are not at all clear in most cases. The average man lives his life through in a way that is little, if any, above the level of animal life. He is born, grows up, works for his living, marries, begets children, grows feeble and then dies. In what way does this differ from the life of an animal? True, he has the power of speech, but speech by no means necessarily implies thought and the power of repeating the words which are spoken by those all around is a power which is also shared by parrots and can in no way be taken as a proof of superiority.

In fact, the only thing that can distinguish a man from animals is the possession of an aim in life which can be consciously striven after and to which all the activities of the life may be directed. Without such an aim a man is a mere animal, potentially superior in that he is capable of conceiving such an aim, but actually animal until he does conceive it.

Let us then examine some of the aims which may be suggested as the goal of life and attempt to come to some conclusion as to which is the true goal. Health, wealth, power, happiness, children, service of one's country, service of humanity, all these may be suggested as possible goals, but investigation will show that not one of them is capable of being the true goal.

Health is clearly inadequate because in the end it is bound to vanish and even the healthiest man must lose his health before he dies. Wealth, it is true, can be

retained right up till death but it must inevitably be left behind then. Moreover, the possession of great wealth brings at least as much anxiety as happiness and it is seldom that one comes across a rich man who is happy.

The possession of power is no doubt an idea that fascinates many men, but a moment's reflection will suffice to show that it is something which is shared by fire, wind and all sorts of inanimate things while, if it is said that what is meant is *consciously* directed power, then it must be replied that mere possession of power is not the goal since it has been admitted that the power has to be directed to some other aim.

Happiness is a thing which, the more it is sought after, the less it is obtained, and, moreover, he would be a poor sort of man who could set up his own happiness as a goal when all around him men were suffering.

If the having of children is to constitute a goal, then what will be the goal of those children? More children?

Again, some will say that service of one's country is the goal of life. But what is meant by a country? Is it the land or is it the people who live on that land? If the former then it is a dead material object and if the latter then it must be admitted that all the people who live and will live on that land will certainly die and that, as all history shows us, in the end the nation itself will surely cease to exist and its name be known no more. And in any case, what will be the aim of the nation's existence? This question will be as far from answer as ever.

Let us turn then to the service of humanity and see if that will be any better. It is certainly true that the service of humanity is a noble ideal and one which is far superior to any of those that have so far been mentioned, but it is by no means entirely satisfactory. For one thing,

such an ideal is exemplified to a perfect degree in the lives of ants and bees whose whole lives are devoted entirely to the service of their communities. In spite of this, however, we do not feel that either ants or bees are exactly what we should consider ideal beings.

Moreover there are further difficulties. In the first place scientists tell us that there will come a day when the sun will get cold and this planet will no longer be able to support life of any sort. In the second place, humanity as ordinarily conceived is only a collection of a large number of separate individuals. Apart from the individuals who make it up, humanity is only an abstraction and has no separate existence. The service of the whole can then only mean the service of the individuals that make up that whole and how is it possible to serve those individuals properly unless we first know what is the goal of their individual lives? It would end in everyone's trying to serve everyone else while no one knew in what one another's welfare lay!

This exhausts our list, but we must also discuss an ideal that has been set forth by some thinkers, the ideal of liberation (*mukti*). These thinkers, observing that the world is full of sorrows and that the cause of those sorrows is to be found in desire, have urged that the goal of life is to be found in the cessation of sorrow by the destruction of desires and this state they have called the state of *mukti* or liberation. There is undoubtedly much truth in this view but we must point out that, in itself, it is not sufficient. 'Liberation' means liberation from bondage and, while it is true that a man who is in bondage cannot accomplish anything at all, it is also true that the mere attainment of freedom is not anyone's final aim but is

always a means to some other aim. In itself it is too purely negative. Freedom we must have as we cannot do anything that is worth doing without it. Man is bound by the fetters of desire, anger and delusion and, until he has liberated himself from these bonds, he will be able to accomplish nothing. But when he is free; what then? It is clear that he will then be faced with the same problem, namely, the question of what is to be the goal of his life.

In the end, having exhausted all possibilities, we shall find ourselves forced to the conclusion that the goal of life must lie in establishing some sort of relationship with something that is beyond life. Anything that is itself included in the field of 'life' will suffer from some or all of the defects that have been enumerated. Either it will be transient or else it will be found to have no meaning except in relation to something else. Just as the meaning of a camera cannot be found within the camera but only in its relation to something that is outside the camera, or just as the purpose of a knife cannot be found within the knife itself but in its relation to something else which, whatever it may be, is not a knife, so the meaning of human life can in no way be found within the field of human life nor can it consist of any special relationship to any living being who exists within that field. Either our life has no meaning at all or else the meaning must be sought in a relationship with some Reality that transcends what we know as life. The very fact that we have a deep-rooted feeling that there is a meaning in life is itself an indication that such a Reality exists.

What is the nature of that Reality? Though no one has ever been able or ever will be able to give an adequate description of it we can see that there are certain characteristics which it must possess. In the first place, we have

seen that it must transcend all that we call life as otherwise it could not serve as the goal of life. But at the same time, it cannot be *merely* transcendent since in that case *it would be impossible for living beings to establish any* sort of relationship with it and we have seen that it is in the establishment of some relation that the purpose of life is to be sought.

Further, it can be readily seen that this Reality must be a spiritual one and not a material one since the goal of life and consciousness can never be found in what is less than itself, that is to say, in what is dead or unconscious. Moreover, only a conscious reality could fulfil the condition that we have seen must be fulfilled, namely, that it shall be at the same time beyond the world and within the world. Any sort of material reality could be one or the other but not both at once, if it were within the world it could not at the same time be beyond the world.

Having then established the fact that the Supreme Reality must be a conscious Reality, we can see that it must be a blissful one. In the first place, it must be a unity because otherwise it would be unable to impart any unity or meaning to life and so could not serve as the Goal of life. That rules out the possibility that it could be a consciousness of mingled pleasure and pain as are our consciousness here while, equally clearly, it could not be a consciousness of unmixed pain since pain is what everyone shrinks from and such a consciousness could therefore in no way serve as a goal. Moreover, since the supreme consciousness must be the ultimate basis of all other consciousness, painful as well as pleasant, it must be a state that is beyond both pain and pleasure as understood by us, and that is the state that is known in Hindu philosophy as '*ānanda*'.

Thus we have seen that the Supreme Reality must be what is called in Hindu Scriptures '*Sat-chit-ānanda*'. It is '*Sat*' because it is the fundamental Reality or Being from which all else takes its rise. It is '*Chit*' because it is a conscious Reality and, in fact, one which is sometimes referred to by the pronoun 'Him', since the word 'It' is one which is used to describe unconscious or dead things and this Reality is, on the contrary, the Life of all lives, the Consciousness of all consciousnesses. Lastly He or It is '*Ananda*' because, as we have seen, His consciousness is one of Eternal and undivided bliss.

It only remains, then, to see what sort of a relationship to this Supreme *Sacchidānanda* constitutes the goal of life. Clearly, the best relationship will be one in which all our functions are centred on that Supreme Reality and dedicated to Him. Man has three main aspects to his nature, intellectual, emotional and volitional or actional. Man is a being who knows, feels and acts, and all these three functions must be dedicated to the Divine Reality if man is to achieve the goal of life It will not be enough to dedicate to It merely our intellects, or merely our emotions or merely our actions because in that case the offering will remain a partial one and only that part of our nature will be redeemed and, the other parts remaining unchanged, we shall not reach the Goal. Our whole intellect must be directed towards knowing Him, our whole emotional nature towards loving Him and all our actions towards serving Him.

That is why Sri Krishna, at the conclusion of His teachings in the Gita, sets forth as His supreme word (*paramamvacha*) and most secret teaching of all the following *shloka*:—

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी माम् नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥

"Manmanā bhava", "place thy mind in Me;" that is to say, devote your intellectual nature to the task of knowing Me. *"Madbhakto"*, "be My devotee;" that is to say, centre your whole emotional nature in My love and worship. *"Madyājī"*, "serve me;" that is to say consecrate all your actions to Me. *"Mām namaskuru"*, "prostrate yourself before Me," in other words, consider yourself as nothing before Me, for I am the very foundation of your being.

This is the finding of Reason and this, too, the supreme teaching of the Lord Himself. This, then, and nothing but this, can be the Goal of life. All that remains is for us to fulfil these demands so that, in the end, we may hear the rest of the *shloka*:—

मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ।

"Thou shalt come to Me, I pledge thee My word, thou art dear to me."*

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OBSTACLES ON THE PATH

The mystical Path is one which is beset with many obstacles like a jungle tract that, through having been long disused, has become overgrown with thorns and infested by snakes. For countless ages we have been treading only the downward *pravṛtti* path, the path of sensual enjoyment and enslavement to matter. Age-old habits are engrained in our hearts in the form of *sanskāras* and, now that we desire to turn and tread the Upward Way, these deeply rooted tendencies stand in our path like so many serpents threatening us, frightening us and barring our progress. On all sides arises the cry that the Path is hard and thorny and many, in despair, rush about frantically from guru to guru seeking in vain for that which does not exist, a smooth easy path to God. Of course it is hard: have not the Rishis described it in the Shrutis as the "difficult path, sharp like the edge of a razor?" Let a man drink alcohol for a few brief years and then try to give it up. His head aches, his stomach becomes disordered, his whole body cries out every second for the stimulus to which it has grown accustomed and his very life becomes dull and joyless to him. Such are the effects of a few brief years of habit. How then can we expect it to be easy to give up the habits accumulated during thousands of lives, habits which have become engrained in every atom of our natures, habits which we cling to as if they were our very souls and without which our lives seem to us joyless and not worth living.

Some there are, it is true, who say that an easy path exists, a path on which there is no trouble at all. All

I can say is that, if such there be, I at least have not found it and that I will believe in its existence when and only when I find a living man who has attained the Goal and who tells me that the Path he has followed was an easy one.

Let us not deceive ourselves with words. It is easy to say "just worship Krishna and you will gain the Goal." Easy, I repeat, to *say* it, but is it easy to do it? Has any reader ever *seen* anyone who really did attain the Goal by *just* worshipping Krishna, *i.e.*, by performing a little easy formal worship? No; if the worship is to be at all seriously effective it must be a worship in which our whole nature, body, mind and soul must be torn away from its roots in the world of the senses and offered at His feet in utter sacrifice to Him. Nor is it enough for us to make this offering once at the time of initiation (*dikshā*), our hearts softened by a little transient emotion. It is an offering that has to be made throughout every hour and minute of our lives, nay, one which has to be sustained throughout many lives with unflinching will and unshaken devotion. As it says in the Gita बहुनाम् जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान् माम् प्रपद्यते "after many lives a man attains to me." Assuredly it is not in one life that Sri Krishna can be attained and if we see fortunate souls who appear to do so in this very life we should know for certain that what we behold in their cases is but the final fruit of heroic struggles extended through many past lives. The apparent ease with which such a man as Professor Rammurti can lift on high weights which would crush an ordinary man was not acquired by sitting lazily among cushions dreaming of how nice it would be to be a strong man. Neither was it acquired in an effortless way along with his mother's milk. Such strength is the fruit of a long and severe training.

When we look around us and see the prolonged and sometimes really heroic efforts that are being made by men on all sides to achieve all sorts of worldly aims, such as lifting heavy weights, becoming a champion tennis player or boxer, or becoming rich, learned or famous, when we read of the deathless heroism of explorers risking their lives to reach the North Pole, of the early airmen striving to win for man the conquest of the air, of the young blood poured out like water for the defence of a country or of doctors risking and often meeting death in horrible forms in the attempt to cure the bodies of their brother men; when we see all this around us are we not ashamed to sit in ease and comfort fingering our beads and pretending that we are treading the path which leads to the Achievement of achievements, the Goal of goals, the End which, having attained, there remains nothing left to be accomplished? No wonder the younger generation turns away from us in scorn saying in contempt that there can be nothing in this religious business with its grand words and petty and sometimes shameful deeds. If there be a God, they say, surely He cannot be so cheap as this, and they turn away from religion. We hold up our hands in horror, say that the *Kali yuga* is getting stronger and accuse these young men of being '*nāstikas*' and unbelievers, but, in a way, they are right. Do we who profess to be religious show them any ideals worthy of imitation? Is there any heroism to be found in our lives to rival the heroism that they see in other spheres of life? Do we exhibit greater wisdom, wider tolerance, more self-sacrifice and less selfishness than other men or does not rather the bitterness of our sectarian quarrels fill the debating halls with clamour, the magazines with useless words and only too often, alas, the market place with blood? Surely we

might at least reflect that no one who has not seen God for himself is entitled to assert that his own beliefs are true and that another man's are false.

But it is time to return to the subject of the Path and its obstacles. In Gita 3, verse 33 we are faced with a formidable difficulty. Having been repeatedly instructed as to the necessity for performing controlled (*yukta*) action, we are suddenly confronted with a serious problem. We are told that even the man of knowledge behaves in conformity with his own nature, as do all beings, hence what shall restraint avail?

प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति ।

As usual, the Teacher confronts us with a difficulty in order to draw forth all our efforts and in the next verse he gives us the key to its solution.

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।
तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत्तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ॥

"Attraction and repulsion are established between the senses and the objects of the senses; let none come under the dominion of these two, for they are obstructors of the Path."

In this verse is given the explanation of why all beings are bound by their own natures. Attraction and repulsion, love and hate, desire and loathing have been established by *Prakrti* between the senses and their objects. Whatever we see, we like or dislike; whatever we hear, we like it or dislike it, whatever we taste, we like it or dislike it, and so with all the other senses, including the mind. Liking things we strive to attain or preserve them; disliking things we strive to avoid them and thus are we bound by our natures. We cannot make progress along

the Path as long as we are thus enslaved. Whichever way we turn we cannot escape the bonds. If we enjoy objects, we are the victims of attraction and, if we reject them, we are equally the victims of repulsion.

That is why Sri Krishna urges us to escape from the dominion of these two masters saying that they are obstructors of the Path.

But then how are we to act at all? Act we must, for we know that Krishna was not teaching the actionless *samādhi* of the Sānkhyas. Once more the answer comes in the next verse which introduces the idea of '*swadharma*', of doing the action that is our duty regardless of consequences in the shape of pleasure and pain. Instead of acting out of attraction or repulsion we are to do that which is our *dharma* and thus shall be able to escape the bondage of the two Obstructors.

Some will perhaps feel inclined to object that we are also told to abandon all *dharmas* (सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य). But that is true for a higher degree of development and applies only at a much later stage in the Path than the one we are considering now as, indeed, its place in the Gita shows. We are fond of quoting that verse with its glorious promise but, for most of us, it is a stage that lies far in the future and there are many things to be accomplished before we arrive at that sublime state. Here it will suffice to point out that no man can abandon what he has not got and that we must pass through the stage of having a *dharma* (and 'having' means *practising*, not merely professing,) before we can be asked to abandon it and take refuge in God alone. Once more, it is easy to *say* with more or less of emotion 'श्रीकृष्ण शरणं मम" "Sri Krishna is my refuge," but to *mean* it, to put it into practice, to carry it out every second of our lives and never

to forget it under any stress of danger or of difficulty, this is one of the hardest things in the world and is possible only when we are approaching the very end of the Path.

"But", asks Arjuna, and every *sādhaka* will echo his words, "what is it that drags away a man into sin as if constrained by force?" All who try to tread the Path are only too familiar with this experience. Something seems to drag us away from what we know to be our duty. A rushing whirlwind carries away our will and, despite the protests of our higher selves, we do that which we know to be wrong. What is this enemy lodged within our breasts?

Like a flash comes the Teacher's answer·

काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुण समुद्भवः ।
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम् ॥

"It is desire, it is anger, born of *rajoguna*, all consuming, all polluting, know thou this to be our foe here on earth." Desire, the desire to enjoy, lurks in the heart of the *sādhaka* like a fire smouldering under ashes. For weeks it smoulders slowly in seeming quiescence and then, one day, the constant change and interplay of the *gunas* all around throws inflammable material on the seeming ashes and the flames flash out and, in a few moments, all the self-control that has been gained by months of patient endeavour is burnt up and we are back where we started and the wall has to be laboriously built up again.

Notice too the profound psychology of the teaching. Desire is equated with anger, two things which to the ordinary man seem to be quite different. The teaching is a true one. The forces of desire, suppressed rigidly within the heart of the *sādhaka*, only too often find expression in an irritability which, on occasion, issues in a burst

of flaming anger, which, whether it appears to be "justified" or not, burns up the accumulated efforts (तपोधन) of the *sādhaka* as effectually as if it had been desire (काम) that he had indulged. It is for that reason that the ancient Rishis laid down that for a *brahmachārī* to lose his temper was as bad as for him to lose his *brahmacharya*, for, in fact, the two are the same, alternative manifestations of the same all-powerful inner enemy.

This 'Thing of sin' (पाप्मानं) has to be slain utterly, and slain beyond any chance of recovery. This is no easy task, for, as Sri Krishna points out, it pervades our whole nature, dwelling not merely in the senses but in the mind and even in the *buddhi*. When an enemy has overrun with his troops our whole country, on what vantage ground are we to collect our forces to give him battle. Useless to talk, as is often done, of controlling the desires by mere mental effort, for the mind itself is infected and affords us no safe ground on which to stand.

Higher than the mind, as the Gita says, is the *buddhi*, the faculty which gives intuitive knowledge of the truth. That is why Sri Krishna lays so much emphasis on the *buddhi yoga*, the union with the *buddhi*, as the means of attaining desirelessness in action. But even the knowledge of the *buddhi*, as long as it has to find expression through a mind (*manas*) is liable to be distorted by the desire currents which flow in the latter and therefore the Gita goes on to say that there is in fact only one such ground, one impregnable fortress in which we can take our stand and give battle and that is the *Ātman*, the pure light of Consciousness which pervades and supports all the *tattvas*, even to the lowest. Therefore we read: "Thus understanding It (the *Ātman*) to be higher even than the *buddhi*, restraining the self (the lower or personal self) by the

Atman, slay, O mighty armed one, the enemy in the form of desire, so hard to be overcome."

The *Atman* is indeed the one *tattva* that can never be infected by *kāma*. Stainless and ever luminous by its very nature, the flames of desire can never touch it. There in the very centre and heart of our being is the impregnable fortress in which we must take refuge if we are to come out victorious in the conflict. Only by the Light of the *Atman* can *kāma* be conquered and this we must do or perish. There is no other way. No words, no emotions, no mere efforts at forcible control will be efficacious. Sooner or later we must all learn the mystery which is concealed in the simple words "restraining the self by the *Atman* (संयम्यात्मानमात्मना) for only then do we come in sight of final victory. Useless, moreover, to think of attainment of the Goal without achieving the victory, for, as all know, "where there is Rāma there is no *kāma* and where there is *kāma* there is no Rāma.

The last obstacle that will be dealt with here is what is known as '*bheda Buddhi*', the seeing of things and people as different. Again and again in the Gita the Lord has stressed the necessity of seeing all beings in Him and Him in all beings. The Bhāgawata teaches us that the knowers of the truth have seen that there is only One '*adwaya tattva*' and in the Gita we learn that *Vāsudeva* is all (वासुदेव सर्वम्) Instead, however, of trying to realise this truth we invent all sorts of distinctions and make all manner of differences in our treatment of our fellow beings. Rich and poor, learned and ignorant, Brahman and non-Brahman, Vaishnava and Shaiva, these are the distinctions we observe and, in observing them, we forget all about the One *Vāsudeva* who is in all. Some do not even stop there but

introduce distinctions in the Forms of the Lord Himself. They separate Shiva from Krishna or Krishna from Rāma and then imagine that by indulging in this *bheda buddhi* they will be able to attain to Him who is the One Eternal Tattva, the *'ekam advitīyam'*. The truth is that as long as there is *bheda buddhi* in the mind He can never be seen. Truly has the Shruti delcared:—

मनसैवानुद्रष्टव्यम् नेह नानास्ति किंचन ।
मृत्योः स मृत्युमाप्नोति य इह नानेव पश्यति ॥

"Through the mind, verily, is He to be seen; there is no difference here whatever. He who sees seeming difference here goes from death to death."

Strong words, no doubt, but utterly and eternally true. None can ever attain *Vāsudeva* as long as he sees *'bheda'* where none exists. Pandits may pride themselves upon the number of subtle distinctions that they are able to introduce in any subject but *sādhakas* should rather strain every nerve to root out from their hearts even those so-called 'natural' feelings of difference that are inborn in us as the result of ages spent upon the path of *Pravrtti*.

Thus it is that Sri Krishna informs Uddhava (Bhag. 11. 7) that the seeing of difference between things is a misapprehension of the man of untrained mind and is one which leads to having to enjoy good and evil results (पुंसोऽयुक्तस्य नानार्थो भ्रमः स गुणदोषभाक्) which, of course, bind us in the world of matter and thus we see that there can be no talk of attainment of the Goal until this *bheda buddhi* is quite overcome. We must learn to follow the instructions given by the Lord in the same chapter:—

त्वं तु सर्वम् परित्यज्य स्नेहं स्वजनबन्धुषु ।
मय्यावेश्य मनः सम्यक् समदृग् विचरस्व गाम् ॥

"Therefore, having abandoned all affection for friends and kinsmen, and with mind properly centred in Me, thou shouldst wander over the earth looking with equal vision on all."

Nations, races, castes, sects, rich, poor, ignorant, learned; none of these distinctions exist in the Reality. They are all the results of the Lord's *Māyā* by which mortals are deceived, तेन मुह्यन्ति जन्तवः ।

> *From* Vāsudeva come all;
> *In* Vāsudeva are all;
> *To* Vāsudeva go all;
> Vāsudeva indeed *is* all.*

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DOUBTS AND THEIR REMOVAL

People in general have a very wrong attitude towards doubt. Instead of regarding doubt as the pathway to knowledge they consider it as something wrong, something which should never have occurred. If a young man has doubts about the truth of something or other and approaches a pandit for help the latter will usually quote a verse from some *shāstra* and treat the matter as settled. If the questioner feels that his doubts have still not been answered the pandit will abuse him as a *nāstika* and unbeliever. The result is that the boy remains unsatisfied and the pandit goes home and writes an article to the magazines complaining that the younger generation is entirely Godless.

The fact is that doubt is the doorway to knowledge and this is the reason why science which relies on doubts and experiment has made such progress while religion which relies on the blind acceptance of what was written in books hundreds or thousands of years ago is gradually losing its hold on men's hearts. All the knowledge that we have is the result of someone's having doubted something that most people of the time believed to be true and this is as true in the field of religion as in that of science.

What is religion nowadays? It consists for the most part in accepting blindly a set of beliefs taught by one's father or teachers. Everywhere you hear men say: "my religion says so and so; our community says so and so; our sacred books teach so and so." As if it mattered a pin what your religion says, what your community believes or what your sacred books teach! The only thing that matters is the

Truth and Truth is only to be attained by caring nothing for what your community or your books say and by fearlessly pursuing it with your heart and soul, caring for nothing till it is attained.

It does not matter in the least how many beliefs have to be abandoned, how many illusions vanish on the way. The Truth stands forever and those who are afraid of the path of free enquiry that leads to it will never reach the Goal. Just as an honest man fears no enquiry into his actions, so he who seeks the Truth fears no enquiry into the grounds of his beliefs, for he knows that what is true can never be shaken while whatever can be shaken by free enquiry is not the truth and can have no real value.

Genuine doubt must not be confused with the senseless habit of arguing for the sake of arguing or for the sake of displaying one's own learning. Nor, again, must doubt about ultimate questions lead to refusal to come to a conclusion on any matter at all. For instance, the fact that one has not been able to understand the origin of the world must not lead one to refuse assent to what can be shown to be true, anymore than a scientist's inability to understand the ultimate nature of electricity leads him to doubt that an electric motor works.

Sincere doubts, however, are the first signs of progress. If a pupil has doubts his teacher should not consider it a mark of wickedness but should encourage him, for they are a sign that he has been thinking for himself and to think for oneself is the first stage on the path to truth.

Having got so far, it will not do to stop there. The mind must not be allowed to remain in doubt permanently, for that weakens the mind and kills all action and progress. संशयात्मा विनश्यति as the Gita says, and so, when once a doubt has arisen in one's mind, every effort must be made

to answer it properly. Usually what people do is merely to silence it, to thrust it out of sight, to pretend that it does not exist. This, however, is of no use. The doubt is thrust into the inner recesses of the heart and there it continues to live and to poison the mind of the doubter like a hidden abscess in the body. In order to silence the doubting voice in his heart he proclaims his opinions outwardly with more and more vehemence, and just because in his heart he does not believe them, he seeks to convert others to them that he may gain support through feeling that many are on his side. Suppressed doubt is thus the source of most religious propaganda and it is usually true that he who is most urgent to convert others to his religion or point of view is he who feels most doubt in his own heart. This is the path to fanaticism and hypocrisy, so he who has come to feel a doubt about something or other should spare no efforts to solve it.

The first step is to make sure that one has understood the problem correctly, and for that purpose it is useful to listen to what competent people have to say on the subject, to read what has been written about it in books.

This is however only the first step and if the answer is not found then one must prepare to find it for oneself. For this purpose two things are necessary, perfect mental sincerity and untiring efforts. If we are to find the truth we must be perfectly sincere in our efforts. We must not allow our prejudices and desires to believe such and such to interfere with our enquiry. We must honestly face all the facts and not hide from them with the idea that if we just shut our eyes to facts they themselves cease to exist.

Next comes effort. Having understood exactly what the problem is we must bend all our efforts towards its

solution, as a starving man bends all his efforts towards finding food. All day the problem must occupy our thoughts. Not only in hours of meditation but at all times we must think and think and then, having done so, hold the mind quiet so that if possible the answer may come. When the tension in the mind has become sufficient it is quite certain that an answer will come and if it does not, it only means either that sufficient thinking has not been done or else that the question has not been rightly put. It is no use trying to solve a question of which the various terms have not been understood. For instance it is no good asking why God made the world until you are entirely clear as to what the word 'God' means to you. Only when all the terms are clear can an answer possibly come.

If, however, you are certain that you understand all the terms in the question and still an answer does not come you must think again and again until the tension is sufficient. Then, one day, either as a flash of insight when the mind is stilled in meditation or as a dream when stilled in sleep, the answer will come.

But do not think because you have had a dream or a vision during meditation, that therefore this is certainly the truth and the *Bhagawān* has revealed it to you. Dreams and visions can be utterly misleading. You must examine the answer carefully and see if it satisfies your reason and heart. If it does not, then you will have to start all over again. If it does satisfy you then you have found your answer, but, even so, you must not assume that it represents the final truth. Very likely you are not ready yet to understand the full truth and so have received the truest answer that you could understand. Therefore you should

always be ready to modify what you had previously thought to be true in the light of further knowledge, just as scientist is always ready to abandon past theories in the light of new facts.

Thus it can be seen that the Path to Truth is a laborious uphill one. Mistake after mistake will be made, but if you persist untiringly and never give up hope then sooner or later you will reach that Knowledge which "being known, all else is known." In any case this is the only safe and certain path. Other ways will leave you either stranded in the sterile desert of orthodoxy or else lost in the jungle of illusions. Opinions you can pick up anywhere, but if you want the Truth you will have to tread this path however hard. Of this however you may be certain, namely that sincerity and effort will inevitably bring success in the end.

In yourself the Truth exists. By yourself it must be striven for and tested. In yourself it will be found.*

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RELIGION AND STUDENT LIFE*

There are now-a-days a great many people about, who are teaching that religion is quite unnecessary; in fact, that it is positively harmful. They say that it is a cause of quarrels among men, of disunity between the nations and that it teaches men to seek enjoyments in some other world instead of attempting to set right evils in this world. Moreover, this attitude, though quite mistaken, is not without some apparent support. Do we not see all round us men claiming to love God but hating and oppressing their fellow-beings in whom God dwells, men claiming to be *yogīs* but who are unable to control their own tempers, and men claiming to have renounced the world while yet they are full to the brim with all the worst things in the world, hatred, greed and envy?

All this is only too true; but yet it is not the fault of religion but of our *human weakness.* In other fields of life the same thing is seen. Read the advertisement of commercial firms and one would think that their sole aim was to serve the public, while, all the time, they are only concerned to make money for themselves often by selling bad goods at high prices. Do we not also see lawyers, who profess to be the servants of justice caring only to make money out of their dupes; and politicians who utter grand swelling words about their country but care only for name and fame for themselves? True again, but we do not, therefore, try to dispense *altogether* with commerce, law and politics.

* Written for the students of the S M. Memorial College, Chandausi.

Quarrels and hatred have certainly been fomented by socalled religion, but even more have they been caused by love of money; and, as for the contention that religion breeds weaklings capable of no achievement in the world, it is plainly and completely false. This can be seen by glancing at some of the greatest names in the world. Alexander the Great, who diligently sought out sages and wise men wherever he went, Napoleon, who reintroduced the Catholic Church in France whence it had been expelled by the revolutionaries, Sir Isaac Newton, the great scientist, Rockefeller, the American millionaire, and, turning to India, some of the greatest names in Indian history, Asoka, Harsha, Akbar and Shivaji, all had a profound belief in the importance of religion. I do not mean to suggest approval of the activities of all these men but merely to show that a belief in religion is no handicap to achievement in any field of activity. If we are weaklings and can achieve nothing, it is our weakness that is the cause and not our religion.

But the worst enemies of religion are not those who attack it from without but those who corrupt it from within. Instead of the calm appeal to knowledge we see on all sides demands for blind belief, belief in this or that scripture, this or that *Avatāra,* this or that teacher, this or that doctrine. Attempts to understand are called disbelief and protests against abuses are labelled atheism. All this is not religion; it is superstition and fanaticism.

Let it be said once and for all that true religion is based not on belief but on knowledge. It is true that belief is necessary, a rational and not a foolish belief, in the early stages, for we see that it is impossible to learn any science or art without an initial belief in the words of the teacher, but it cannot be too much emphasised that

religion begins and ends in knowledge. Begins, because all true religion has its source in the knowledge of teachers who had seen Truth "face to face" and ends, because it has as its goal the enabling of the disciple to see Truth face to face for himself.

Some will perhaps ask why should we worry ourselves about God at all, why not just live a decent life without concerning ourselves with Him? This question arises from an altogether mistaken idea about God. He is not a sort of *Chakravartī Rājā* sitting on a throne somewhere and ruling the world. There is no such being anywhere. Such an idea is the product of human ignorance and superstition. In truth God is the very basis and foundation of our existence, the very Soul of our souls, the eternal Reality on which our transient lives are based.

Life is like a flooded river carrying with it in its mad rush all manner of struggling beings, men, women, children and animals as well as all manner of trees and wreckage, carrying them all down towards the sea of death. Things seem permanent because they are floating along with us, but all alike are rushing towards the end and not one of them can help us. Father, mother, friends, relations, not one of them can save us, for all are in the same flood. Only by reaching the bank can safety be obtained. And the bank of this river is God, call Him by whatever name you will. Neither is the bank far away. Hidden in our own heart, seated in the very midst of our being, is the Deathless, Unchanging One, shining with brightness as of a million sun. None can describe Him, nor ever will, but He is there and He may, as the Gita says, be known and seen and entered into by those who strive to do so.

This is no fancy of poets, no myth or legend of long ago, no dream of white haired old men. It is the living truth, truer than all sciences and all history. It is knowledge of this truth that has given birth to all religions and it is forgetfulness of it that has led to their corruption and death. It may be seen and experienced by us too, not in some heaven after death but here and now in this very life. Therefore, as the Upanishad says, "Arise, awake and seek out the Great Ones, They who will teach you the way to the Goal."

Do not think to find this knowledge in books, though some books may help you. Do not despise the ancient *shāstras* because they may seem to you to contain nothing but old fables quite out of harmony with modern theories. These ancient books contain the records of the experiences of those who have found God in the past. The Eternal wisdom is hidden within them but the gold of Truth has been mixed up with the dust of intellectual theories and of misunderstood traditions and we must carefully pick out each grain of precious metal.

However, there are a few books which are all gold and of such the Gita is one. Every word in the Gita is as true for us today as it was thousands of years ago when it was first spoken. It is not sufficient to read it through. Its words must be meditated upon in our hearts and then acted upon in our daily lives. One verse properly understood and then put into practice is more useful than any amount of learned or merely pious study.

Though, in the end, the knowledge is in our own hearts, books can help us by giving an idea of what to look for, by assisting us to express what we find within. They cannot do more. The *Brahma Vidyā* is not made up of intellectual theories, nor of mere emotional feelings,

nor even of both together. It is something of a quite different nature. It is a shining, living Knowledge and, moreover, a Knowledge that is there in our hearts even now, though in our blindness we may not perceive it. No one can give it us, no *Mahātmā,* no Scripture, not even *Bhagawān* Himself. This last may seem an exaggeration, but it is true; and the reason that even He cannot give it us is because He has given it already, it is there all the time like a garland which we vainly seek everywhere because it is on our own necks.

The same is true about the *Guru.* We need not go touring about the country in search of *Mahātmās* but should seek Him in our own hearts. We can learn something from everyone we meet, but the real Guru, He who will give us the real initiation, must be sought in our hearts, and then, at the right time, He will show Himself outside as well. Till then, no formal *dīkshā* will do much good. How soon He will show Himself depends entirely upon us. He will show Himself when, and not till when, we want Him so badly that there is absolutely nothing in the world that we would not give up in order to find Him. Till we are ready it would be useless for Him to appear because He could do nothing for us. You cannot strike fire out of a wet match no matter how dry the box may be. You must first dry the match before any box can be of use. And one warning: if you find anyone who shows signs of wishing to give you *dīkshā,* perhaps flattering you about your spirituality and saying that all you need is his *dīkshā,* then make your *pranām* to him and go away at once.

Don't be impressed by miraculous powers, whether genuine or merely claimed, as they have nothing whatever to do with real spirituality. It is true that some real

Mahātmās do possess such powers but they usually take very good care that you or I should not know the fact, and mere ability to perform so-called miracles is no evidence of spirituality at all.

Lastly, you will be well advised to keep away from any man who claims to be an *Avatāra* or who allows his *chelās* to claim it for him. Real *Avatāras* do not claim divinity by their words, they show it by their actions.

In the meanwhile there is plenty to do. In the first place there is your body. Keep it healthy by eating pure food, taking sufficient exercise and observing *brahmacharya.* There is no connection between a weak and sickly body and spirituality. You needn't be an athlete but your body should be healthy and under your control. Many become slaves to their bodily habits. They can only eat the food that they are used to and they are miserable if circumstances take them to a place where the food or conditions of life are different. That is all wrong; you ought to be able to eat any food that is wholesome and pure and your body should not be like a motor that will only run on a certain particular brand of petrol. Now while you are young is the time to form good bodily habits. The older you get, the harder it will become, and if you are not careful, instead of your body belonging to you, you will belong to your body.

Next comes the mind. You are at college and your duty is to develop your mind and that does not mean merely passing examinations. Just as you need a healthy body so you need a powerful and well-developed mind. And now is the one time. All your life is before you for you to indulge in politics if you wish to, or amuse yourself with cinemas or novels. All those things you will have plenty of time for later, but if you do not develop your

mind now you will never do it at all. Learn to concentrate upon whatever you are reading and to understand and not merely memorise the subjects you study. And do not set before yourself the ideal of the stupid devotee who can do nothing on earth except weep about God. Knowledge need not in the least interfere with devotion. Knowledge is a great and glorious thing, provided it is digested.

Sometimes we hear also of soul development, but that is really an incorrect phrase since the soul can never be 'developed'. It is pure and shining by its very nature. What is meant is that in so many men the light of the Soul cannot shine forth because it is smothered by the curtain of pride, hatred, greed and selfishness with which we cover it up. It is the gradual removing of these veils that is here referred to, as the development of the Soul. Work away at the destruction of these every moment of your life like a sculptor chipping away the stone in order to make a statue. There can be no statue at all until all the unwanted parts of the stone have been removed. It is hard work but it is the only way. If you do not do this, nothing else will be of the slightest use whatever, neither study of Gita, nor *japa,* nor *dhyāna,* nor *yoga.* And, once more, this is the time. There are those who wait till old age is upon them before they think of God. Then when the body is feeble, the heart cold with selfishness and the mind worn out, they take a *mālā* and hurriedly begin to do *Rāmnām.* But it is too late. नायं आत्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः "Not by the weak is the *Ātman* to be attained." This path is a hard path and now is the time to begin it; now, when the body is full of vigour, the blood coursing freely through the veins, the mind full of ideas and the heart full of love.

In the morning, when you awake, sit for a little, even if it be only for quarter of an hour, and meditate upon the Lord and Lover of all Who is seated in your heart. Think of Him in any form you please but check all other thoughts (you have all the day for them), and offer yourself in utter devotion to Him. Try to keep Him steadily in your mind and, though this is hard at first, it will come with practice. Try also to keep Him in the back of your thoughts throughout the day and, before you sleep, offer to Him all that you have done since morning.

Control your thoughts, control your words, control your acts and, above all, resolve with all your heart that, whether in prosperity or happiness, or whether in misfortune or sorrow, you will tread this path, the bright Path of the Sun, and will not, as do many when they leave college and the first flush of youth is past, allow yourself to slide against your will down the easy gradual slope of worldly life on which, first ideals, then character and, lastly, life itself is lost amidst the dark shadows of materialism and the sorrow of utter failure, a failure which will oppress your heart none the less bitterly even if the whole world is resounding with your fame. *Find Krishna and you have found everything; lose Him and you have lost all.* The whole spiritual life is summed up in those words of His:

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी माम् नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥

"Think of Me, love Me, serve Me, prostrate yourself before Me; verily thou shalt come to Me; I pledge thee My word, for thou art dear to Me."

I will only add one word more. The Lord of all is also the Lover of all. He, the Light of all Lights, the

Pure, the Unchanging One, is shining in all His divine beauty within the hearts of all beings even of the most degraded. Weak or strong, learned or ignorant, wise or foolish, friend or foe, fellow-countryman or foreigner, animal or human being, sinner or saint, none are without Him and of all He is the Friend.

Disagree with everything I have written; forget it if you like, for it is only the words of a man like yourself; but there is one thing I will tell you and I beg you for God's sake never to forget it but to burn it into your hearts. It is this; *If we do not love our fellow beings, we shall never find God even in a thousand ages.*

CRUELTY AND RELIGION

Some time ago, I read in the writings of a critic of Hinduism that Sri Shankarāchārya had laid down that if a Sūdra even accidentally hears the Veda his ears are to be filled with molten lead. Considering this to be either a malicious lie or, at least, a misinterpretation, I at once went to examine the *Shārīrak Bhāshya* in order to find out the truth. To my horror and disgust, however, I found that the statement was literally true! Here is the passage as it occurs in Shankara's *Bhāshya* on the *Vedānta Sutras, Adhyaya* 1, *Pāda* 3, verse 38. The *Sūtra* under discussion is श्रवणाध्ययनार्थप्रतिषेधात् स्मृतेश्च। Sūdras are not entitled to study the *Vedānta* "on account of prohibition in *Smṛti* of their hearing and studying the *Veda* and performing *Vedic* rites."

Commenting upon this Srī Shankarāchārya quotes *Smṛtis* which say that "the ears (of a Sūdra) who hears the *Veda* are to be filled with molten lead and lac" (अथास्य वेदमुपशृण्वतस्त्रपुजतुभ्यां श्रोत्रप्रतिपूरणम्)। Further, other *Smṛtis* are quoted.—"His (the Sūdra's) tongue is to be slit if he pronounces it and his body to be cut in half if he preserves it." (भवति च वेदोच्चारणे जिह्वाछेदो धारणे शरीर भेद)।

I then turned to Srī Rāmānuja's *Srī Bhāshya* thinking that Vaishnavas, at least, devoted to the worship of the Father and Protector of all beings, could not have sanctioned this monstrous cruelty. But I found that Rāmānuja, too, worshipped by his followers as the *avatāra* of Ananta, and the medium of the Lord's grace to men, about whom so many heart-moving stories are

related, he, too, quotes those identical *Smṛtis* and, paying no attention to the horror of it, treats the passage as a chance to refute his opponents, the *Māyāvādīs*, saying that, on *Māyāvādī* principles Sūdras ought to be allowed to study Vedānta even though the Sūtrakār forbids it.

There is a story related of Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu that a certain Hindu Rājā, in whose mouth a Mohammadan had spat, was told by the pandits that the only *prāyaschitta* would be for him to abandon his body, by drinking molten ghee. The unfortunate Rājā went to Mahāprabhu to ask his opinion and was told by him that the utterance of Harināma was the best *prāyaschitta* for all offences.

Naturally, I thought then that the teachings of his (Chaitanya Deva's) followers would not contain anything of that sort and I turned to *Govinda Bhāshya* which was written by Mahāprabhu's great follower and devotee, Baladeva Vidyābhushan, who claimed that the *bhāshya* was revealed to him by Sri Govinda Himself. There I found that, though the *bhāsyakāra* quotes only the comparatively mild *Smṛtis* that a Sūdra is impure like a graveyard (*Shmashāna*) and merely refers to the other *smṛtīs* in passing, yot the *ṭikākāra* on the above expressly reintroduces the previously quoted *smṛtis* in all their full horror.

Now, I have no intention at present of discussing the question as to whether Sūdras have or have not the right to study the Vedas. In principle, the doctrine of *adhikāravāda* is certainly true and even its practice is a subject upon which I do not propose to enter just now. I am merely concerned to ask my readers what they are going *to do* about a situation which, I have no doubt, strikes them with as much horror as it did me.

The question is not whether Sūdras are to be allowed to study the Vedas (although the guardians of those same Vedas have sold their manuscripts and knowledge to foreigners for the latter to publish and translate) but what we are to say about teachings that lay down that if a Sūdra *accidentally* (see the *tīkā* on Shankara's *Bhāshya*) overhears the Vedas being read he is to be treated in this terrible manner?

Note further that it does not rest simply upon the authority or opinion of the above-mentioned celebrated *Bhāshyakāras* but claims to be the *smṛti* itself. Now there is a celebrated and oft-quoted verse in the *Purāṇas* in which *Bhagawān* Himself says that the *Shrutis* and the *Smṛtis* are His commands (श्रुतिस्मृति ममैवाज्ञा) and that those who do not obey them are not Vaishnavas however much *bhakti* they may show in other ways. This creates an altogether intolerable situation and leaves a man with the alternatives of either agreeing to things that are unspeakably wicked or else of ceasing to call himself a Vaishnava.

In defence of the forbidding of Sūdras to study the Veda it is usually urged that, as they have not (or at any rate, in the past, had not) any Sanskrit education, to read the Veda would only do them harm as they would misunderstand it just as, for instance, a boy will not be admitted to the M. A. class in a college until he has shown his fitness for it by passing his B. A. This is, of course, quite reasonable, but if by accident or even intent, an unqualified boy does get into an M.A. lecture he will merely be turned out and not be subjected to savage cruelties. And yet, the *Smṛtis* quoted with approval by the eminent *Bhāshyakāras* expressly lay down that if a

Sūdra even accidentally hears the Veda he is to be treated (on God's orders) in a way which, to speak frankly, is an unspeakable and utterly unforgiveable wickedness when applied to any living being whatever fault or crime he may have been guilty of, still more when his only guilt consists in overhearing the words of *Bhagawān* which he is even not able to understand! Neither *Brahmajñāna* nor nine-fold *bhakti* nor anything else can ever excuse the perpetration of deeds of cruelty nor the approval of such deeds either. Such things are exactly on a level with the iniquities of the Catholic Inquisition which tortured and burned countless thousands of men, women and children whose only crime was that they had held different beliefs from the ones taught by the church. In what way is this worse than this torturing of a fellow-being, the *'ansha'* of the Lord Himself, because he has overheard without understanding the words of God which are kept secret by the learned and powerful?

Perhaps it will be said that such *'prāyaschittas'* (the commentator uses this word to describe these tortures!) were never actually carried out and never even meant to be. I wish I could be sure that was true. It is however, pretty certain that the pandits who prescribed the drinking of boiling ghee to the rājā mentioned above really meant him to do so and it is perfectly certain that the other pandits who prescribed drowning as the *prāyaschitta* for the father of the great *bhakta* Jñāneshwara were in deadly earnest as the unfortunate man and his wife did actually drown themselves in the hope that by thus offering themselves as human sacrifices to orthodoxy, their innocent children would be admitted to society. Even then, however, the perfidious pandits refused to perform the *upanayana* ceremony of the children who consequently had

to remain uninitiated. Doubtless, appropriate *Smṛtis* were quoted learnedly in support of this treatment. From this it will be seen that the argument that such things were never done can scarcely hold. Even if, for the sake of argument, we were to admit that the *smṛtikāras* themselves did not intend that such things should be done, even then it remains an outrage that such teachings should be allowed to pass as the words of God as it could easily have been foreseen that they would later be taken literally by cruel and selfish men.

The real issue is whether we are going to believe that cruelty is sanctioned by *Bhagawān* whatever ancient and sacred books may say that it is? To him who says 'yes' I can only entreat him to reflect that he *may* be mistaken and that however divine the *Shāstra* may have been in its origin, it has been transmitted to us through the memories and writings of purely human beings who like all human beings were doubtless subject to error. I would beg them to call up the scene in imagination with all its bloody details and to reflect that a man thus cruelly tortured to death will, unless he is a saint, be filled with thoughts of terror, hatred and revenge and that, leaving his body in such a state of mind, he will take birth in some cruel and *tāmasic* form and so work himself and the world further harm. Is this the teaching of the Lord of compassion, the Refuge of those who have no refuge?

To those who would answer 'no' I would say that we cannot let it rest there. It will not do simply to say no and then pass on. We must not rest quietly in the assurance that at least nowadays such things are not done. No doubt they are not, for law and public opinion alike would put a stop to them. Nevertheless there are many other practices which, though not as glaring as these, are

yet intolerable cruelties and are continued to this day because of their supposed Divine sanction. If we once admit the principle that *Bhagawān* would never sanction, let alone command, cruelty we must then fearlessly erase from our religious teachings all such acts however well-established they may be

In this connection there is a further point. Everyone who reads the *shāstras* becomes aware that in them are found a number of sayings which, at any rate, *appear* to be contradictory. There are, for instance, sayings that there is no caste among Vaishnavas and that it is a sin to treat a fellow-Vaishnava as having a lower caste than oneself and yet there are also rules which differentiate between a 'Brāhman Vaishnava' and a 'Sudra Vaishnava'. There are passages which set forth the greatness of *Bhagawān's mahāprasād* and relate how a man became freed from all sins through eating some fragments of *prasād* that had fallen from a dog's mouth and yet there are apparently others which forbid a Brāhman to eat *prasād* which had been touched by a man of lower caste. There are passages which say that *Harināma* will purify a man from all sins and there are others which lay down elaborate tortures as *prāyaschittas* for various offences. I am not here concerned to give an opinion as to why there should be such apparent contradictions but simply to point out what must be obvious to all, namely that on a great many matters of practical importance two sorts of utterances can be found in the *Shāstras* and they may be divided into two classes; those which are full of a noble and lofty freedom and those which are bound by a spirit of narrow restriction. In practice it is to be feared that the use to which we put these two classes of expression is to use the liberal ones in our lectures and writings but to reserve the narrow ones

for our practice; and not merely for our private practice either; we make them binding on others with the whole weight of law and social pressure. I have not given references for all the above statements partly because they are known to all and also because this particular subject is not what I am primarily concerned with at the moment.

Let us, however, return to the main subject; does the Lord of all sanction cruelty or not? For myself I have no hesitation in answering this question with an emphatic negative. The *Upanishads,* the *Gītā,* the *Bhāgawata* and the *Mahābhārata* are filled throughout with teachings setting forth in unmistakable terms the duty of love and compassion to all beings and these lofty teachings, the crest jewel of the *Sanātan Dharma,* should be allowed to overrule by Divine right all lesser or narrower teachings. Do not fear that the whole structure of Hindu religion will be weakened by such criticism. The *Sanātan Dharma* is no decayed house that will crumble to pieces at a touch. It is built of the rock of Eternal Truth and its sublime beauty will only shine out more resplendently than ever if the mud plaster with which selfish men have covered it up be removed. If, on the contrary, the mud is not removed it is becoming increasingly certain that the younger generation, deceived by the cracked and dirty mud plaster will abandon the whole building in the belief that it is unsafe and falling to pieces.

मा हिंस्यात् सर्वभूतानि "Do injury to no living being!" This is the sublime teaching of the Veda. There is no sin greater than cruelty and he who inflicts suffering or allows it to be inflicted upon others, will, by the working of the eternal laws of *karma,* be forced himself, sooner or later, to undergo that same suffering himself. Nowhere in the heavens above or in the world beneath is there a

place where a man can escape the penalty of his actions. There can be no *Brahmajñāna* and no *Bhagawat bhakti* for him who injures his fellow beings and none for him, either, who out of lazy acquiescence or selfish fear of social consequences allows others to do so and does not raise his voice to the skies in protest.

In conclusion, I would add that if among those who read these words there should be any who previously called me friend and are now disposed to think me a foe I can only lay my head at their feet with these words· To all life is dear; the same blood flows red from the wounds of all; the same tears flow salt from the eyes of all; the minds of all wince at cruel words and—*the same Lord judges the actions of all.*

नमो विश्वरूपाय विश्वस्थित्यन्तहेतवे ।
विश्वेश्वराय विश्वाय गोविन्दाय नमो नमः ॥ *

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THE POLLUTION OF TEMPLES

The question of the admission of the so-called untouchables into Hindu temples is one which can be approached from two sides. On the one hand, there are those who consider that the matter is one to be settled by reason and general human considerations while, on the other hand, there are those who think that it has been settled once and for all by the scriptures and that all that is needed is for some pandit of unimpeachable orthodoxy to reconcile any apparent contradictions in different texts. For this latter party no words from one born in a different culture are called for or, indeed, would be listened to.

In any case, I am no pandit to marshal arrays of *shāstrik* texts, but will quote the noble words of Mahāmahopādhyāya *Srī* Pramathanāth Tarkabhusan, the revered and learned Principal of the Sanskrit College of the Benares Hindu University.

"In whatsoever caste he may have been born, he who has abandoned low conduct and in whose clean heart *bhagawat bhakti* has arisen, he is touchable; he is pure."

(*Sanātan Hindu,* page 96).

Listen also to *Bhagawān's* words in the *Shāstra.*

न मेऽभक्तश्चतुर्वेदी मद्भक्तः श्वपचः प्रियः ।
तस्मै देयं ततो ग्राह्यं स च पूज्यो यथा ह्यहम् ॥

"The *'abhakta' chaturvedī Brāhman* is not dear to Me but the *bhakta Chandāla* is dear. He is a worthy recipient of gifts, one whose gifts may be received by others and one who is as fit to be *worshipped* as I myself."

Now, do these words mean what they say or are they mere poetry? If the latter, then the whole of the *Shāstra*

may be mere poetry also. But we are told that such a *bhakta* should be *dīna* and humble. He should not consider himself worthy to enter the temples. This is one of the devices which men have invented to get round the plain meaning of the *shāstras*. Is it the outcaste *bhakta* alone who should be *dīna* or should not the Brāhman *bhakta* also be too *dīna* to consider himself a Brāhman? ब्रह्मं जानाति ब्राह्मणः And if the *chandāla bhakta* is too *dīna* to enter by himself should not his fellow men carry him into the temple on their shoulders ?

But why talk of *bhaktas*? Are all the caste men who enter the temples great *bhaktas*? Why should not the miserable and the unfortunate, though no greater and no less *bhaktas* than the multitudes who throng the temples, have a right to lay their sorrows at the feet of God? The *bhakta* has no need of temples of brick and stone, for the whole earth is his temple and he sees his Lord in the hearts of all beings. It is for the wretched and the sinful, for those who cannot see Him in their hearts that temples are needed. It is they, above all, who need the sight of some concrete image to draw their hearts by its beauty and to teach them that there is One who sees beyond the frailties of the flesh to the stainless soul within.

But no! He who most needs the temple is not allowed within its sacred precincts The schools, the law-courts and the railways are open to all but the temples of God are shut to those whose eyes most need the vision of His image.

For what is this pollution that the outcaste brings with him? *Shākta* temples are not considered polluted by the blood and corpses of slaughtered goats nor are the great Vaishnava temples of the South thought to be made unclean by the immorality of the so-called '*deva-dāsīs*'. Even the

all-pervading greed of the priests, greed which prevents the devotees from gaining that peace of mind that should be the result of a visit to a temple, even this greed, I repeat, is not considered to pollute the holy atmosphere. But if a poor and untaught outcaste, no better and no worse than thousands of his 'betters', sets foot within, then the temple must be purified and even the *vigraha* will perhaps have to undergo *prāyaschitta!*

But such people eat meat, comes the horrified cry! Well, what if they do? Do not thousands of Brahmans in our cities eat meat? Do not thousands, even of Vaishnavas, eat fish and do not many of the westernised even eat beef? Everyone knows that they do and yet, if they just exchange their suits for a *dhoti,* there is no objection to their entering the temples.

I am ashamed that in the past I have myself partially defended this state of things. I did so because I believed the words which promised that if a man of any caste or no caste took Vaishnava *dīkshā* he would be allowed in all temples. I now have seen that in all ordinary cases this is quite untrue and that all the grand words were mere empty poetry and meant nothing practical at all.

Let us utterly reject such cruel injustice. Srī Krishna is in the hearts of all of us. Let none trifle with the truth before His all-seeing eye. Sweet is the taste of arguments and texts that support injustice but bitter indeed is the fruit when *karma* flings the garments of an 'untouchable' body upon us as the result of an inhuman treatment of fellow beings in whose hearts Krishna Himself does not scorn to dwell.

NON-ATTACHED MAN AND FREE SOCIETY*

Once more the rising sun of Indian ideals is gilding one of the high peaks on the western horizon. All whose eyes are open to the eternal truths proclaimed by the great seers of the east, all who adhere to what Mr. Huxley calls "the great tradition of civilised Asiatic and European philosophy" must be grateful for this book. Not only that; we must offer our salutations to Mr. Huxley for the courage which has led him to disregard the disapproval of, doubtless, a large section of his former admirers, for the sincerity which is stamped on every line of the book, for the beauty of the words in which he has expressed the ancient truths and, above all, for the clear insight with which he has penetrated to the heart of the jungle of contemporary problems.

There are those (as Mr. Huxley well knows, for he was one of them formerly) who proclaim that the world is meaningless and that all ideals are purely temporary phenomena arising out of social and economic causes. In this book he definitely rejects this gloomy philosophy and shows that in general people who consider the world empty of meaning do so because they wish to throw over the restraints that fetter their freedom to do as they please, particularly in sexual and political matters. Moreover it is found that few, if any, can consistently remain for long in such a philosophy but hasten to re-introduce meaning (and usually an evil meaning) into some particular part of

* ENDS AND MEANS This article was a review of Aldous Huxley's book and appeared in the *Aryan Path* of Bombay.

the whole, a deified nation (Fascism) or an idolised class (communism).

In opposition to all such he shows that, though ideals have varied in time and place, yet the ideals formulated by the few who have been most successful in rising above the limitations of their environments and personal circumstances show a remarkable resemblance. Just as true literature is a quite different thing from the wish fulfilment stuff that fills the magazines and bookstalls, so true ideals are something quite different from the wish fantasies which commonly pass as such. The latter are a species of day-dreaming while the former are the very norm and pattern of the universe itself. Both come forth from our minds, but the pseudo-ideal has its roots in the submental desire nature while the ideal proper descends from the regions above the mind, the regions in which, as every mystic knows, the Divine Reality itself has to be sought and found. Unlike the wish fantasy which seeks escape from the facts of the contemporary world, the true ideal, when it can find a heart fit for its growth, gives battle with the world and remoulds it nearer to the Divine Norm. Taking his stand upon the realisations of the mystical teachers of all ages (though, throughout the book, the overtones of at least some degree of personal experience can be heard by an attentive ear) Mr. Huxley shows that the ideal man is the non-attached man and the ideal society, a free and just society, fit for non-attached men and women to be members of; "Non-attached to his bodily sensations and lusts, non-attached to his craving for power and possessions, non-attached to the objects of these various desires, non-attached to his anger and hatred; non-attached to his exclusive loves. Non-attached to wealth, fame and social position. Non-

attached even to science, art, speculation, philanthropy. Yes, non-attached even to these. For, like patriotism in Nurse Cavell's phrase, 'they are not enough'!"

This non-attachment, which recalls so vividly the teaching of the Gita, is by no means a merely negative state. The path to it lies through all the positive virtues, and, when attained, it is an intensely positive condition of what he terms charity and awareness; the compassion and wisdom of the Bodhisattva. Some may think the word non-attachment insufficiently expressive. No doubt the word (and also the state) is not too common in the west, but, in truth, it is difficult to find a better word ('detachment' has too much suggestion of aloofness) to describe the ideal state of inner poise in which the soul, inactive in the very midst of actions, mingles in all the deeds of men and yet remains untouched by worldly bonds.

All this has been said before, though even for its clear restatement we are grateful. What has not been done before, or never so adequately in recent times, is the penetrating critique of the means by which these ideals are to be realised. This is the point at which so many have gone astray. Knowing that "hatred ends not by hatred; hatred ends by love alone," we have yet given a reluctant assent to policies of "re-armament for the sake of peace;" knowing that all that leads to separateness is evil, we yet have given some countenance to idolatrous worship of our respective nations and knowing that no true teacher ever trespasses upon the free-will of his pupil, we yet have dallied with the idea that a dictatorship, even if not quite of the Russian or German type, could perhaps provide a remedy for the diseases of society.

But "good ends can be achieved only by the employment of appropriate means. The end cannot justify the

means for the simple and obvious reason that the means employed determine the nature of the ends produced. If we reach the end of which all the prophets from Isaiah to Karl Marx have spoken with one voice, the establishment of "liberty, peace, justice and brotherly love" we must be careful to use only appropriate means for its realisation. In all the fields of life, social, economic and political as well as in education and religion we must walk in the direction of that goal and not in the opposite direction. We must shut our ears to the siren voices which assure us that liberty can be attained by curtailing freedom of thought and expression, that peace can be attained by war (even if called a war-to-end-war), that justice can be achieved by armed force (even if termed the force of collective security) and that brotherly love can come through idolatrous worship of our own nation

Mr. Huxley enunciates three principles which should guide us in all our efforts for reform. The first is that only strictly necessary changes shall be carried out; the second is that no reform, however intrinsically desirable, should be undertaken if it is likely to result in violent opposition and the third is that desirable changes should be made, wherever possible, by the application of methods which are already familiar and approved in other fields.

Thus in education we should extend the principles, already applied with excellent results in Kindergarten schools, of educating for freedom, intelligence, responsibility and co-operation. At present all that is accomplished in the elementary schools is undone in the secondary schools, where we inculcate the military 'virtues' of slavish submission to superiors and brutal domination over inferiors. In this connection Mr. Huxley has very pertinent things to say about the sinister reversal of Lenin's

enlightened educational policy that has been brought about by Stalin in the interests, doubtless, of military efficiency.

In society the same methods that are at present reducing inequalities should be gradually extended and in industry we must encourage co-operation and decentralisation if humanity is not to be crushed in the wheels of its own machines. Evidence is brought to show that industries can be run by small self-governing groups *without any loss of industrial* as opposed to military efficiency and, in this way, in all fields of life, men will be trained to live in freedom, in co-operation and in brotherhood.

But there is one thing that prevents all these desirable reforms, and that is the threat of war which hangs like a great thundercloud over the world. While war is imminent the need to be able to wield the whole nation as one man prevents all consideration of higher values.

Long ago Lowes Dickinson wrote that either we must end war or war will end us. It is quite useless to dream of a final war that will end all war. Hatred and violence breed answering violence and hatred, and those of us who entered the last war with ideals (or rather illusions) in our hearts know well the fate that befell them in the brutal and cynical 'peace' treaty of Versailles. It was then that the seeds of the coming war were sown and the ancestry of those seeds can be traced through the Franco-Prussian and Napoleonic wars, and the revolutionary violence of the Jacobins right back to the violence with which predatory robber barons established their dominance over an enslaved peasantry. Thus violence goes streaming on through time echoing and re-echoing forever until neutralised and brought to nothing by its opposite, non-violence.

A modern war on a large scale will destroy all the fruits of culture and civilisation in the countries of the 'victors' as in those of the vanquished, not only because of the ghastly power and range of modern armaments, but because, in order to defeat the militarily efficient totalitarian states, the 'democratic' countries will have to transform themselves into the likeness of their enemies. Once that is done what will remain that is worth preserving, worth fighting for?—The dictators have told us in no uncertain terms what they think of freedom and toleration, freedom of thought and of the press, freedom of science, art, conscience and religion. What their 'values' are we all know only too well and let none think that they are the purely personal characteristics of the present dictators. They are those of dictators in general.

If we wish to end war before it ends us we must seek out the causes and bend our efforts to bringing about their cessation. Neither violence (even if called the force of the League) which always breeds further violence, nor mere socio-economic reforms—badly needed though they are—will suffice to end war. Mr. Huxley shows what the Buddha showed long before, that the roots of war are in our hearts in the form of greed, hatred and stupidity. It is in our own hearts that peace must be established before it can be reflected in the outer world. We must establish peace within and then meet violence without, not by answering violence, fatuously hoping to crush it once and for all (the 1914 arguments whose bitter fruit now fills our mouths) but by systematic non-violence in the manner shown by Deák in Hungary and by Gandhi in S. Africa and India.

But non-violent resistance needs training no less than war, training in the overcoming of fear and in self-control

even in the face of the most trying circumstances. This training can best be achieved by small self-governing groups of devoted men and women, holding property in common prepared to live or die for their ideals * Such groups will call for strenuous efforts and sacrifices from their members and they will practise a *yogic* discipline in order to transcend their individual limitations. The sacrifices required, though great, are not greater than those demanded by nations at war, and, like monks in their rejection of "the things of this world" they will form living centres of peace and co-operation showing the way to others in the fields of industry and, when necessary, of non-violent resistance. Theirs will be that triumph of persuasion over force which according to Plato is the truly civilised method.

Some readers may be inclined to feel that such pacifism does not agree with the teachings of the Gita. It would indeed be a pity if that were so, but it is not. Quite apart from the fact that the Kurukshetra of the Gita is really the inner battlefield of the soul, it must always be remembered that even outer war, as conceived by the author

* Such groups will resemble monastic bodies in their common ownership of property, their responsibilities to each other, their self instituted discipline, their personal efforts towards realisation of supra-individual values and in their withdrawal from the sordid life of competitive *striving* for selfish ends But they will not be monks in the ordinary sense, and it is incorrect to say as one reviewer did, that Mr. Huxley wished the whole world to become a monastery. Charity, care of the sick and education are not now run by monks though monks were the pioneers in those fields It is also quite incorrect to say that he holds up the Zuñi Indians as a pattern He expressly states that they have avoided the evil of aggressiveness only to fall into the other one of sloth What he does urge is that they afford a proof that human nature is not inevitably and naturally aggressive.

of the Gita, was an affair for a professional order of knights who met in equal battle and who lived for fighting. It has nothing whatever to do with the hideous attacks upon defenceless women and children that are the essence of modern war. For the question 'is war right' we must substitute the question 'is it right to blind, poison, mutilate and disembowel innocent women and children', for that is what modern war means when stripped of archaic rhetoric.

To those who urge the forlorn nature of such a hope I would only say that all life seems a forlorn hope. The method of life is not the mechanical one of first laying down a solid ferro-concrete base, and then building our tower on it in perfect safety. Life grows from tiny seeds which send out their delicate shoots and rootlets, which, though so soft, have yet the power to crack and overturn the hardest masonry. As Lao Tsu puts it, "nothing under heaven is softer and more yielding than water, but when it attacks things hard and resistant there is not one that can prevail."

The problem is no doubt a thorny and intricate one. It is hard to be sure of the consequences of disarmament, but after all, the Gita warns us that the true path consists in doing what is right without fear of the results to ourselves. It would seem therefore that, whatever may be right for others who do not see it, those of us who see the truth that violence can never end by violence, must turn our faces fearlessly towards the light we perceive and give our hearts as soil in which the seeds of peace and life may grow. Our own bodies and those for whom we care may perish in the process but we can be sure of one thing, namely, that every bit of hatred that is overcome by love vanishes forever from the world, and some day, sooner or

later, from those seeds will grow a great tree capable of giving shade to all the peoples of the earth. In the end triumph is certain, for the Divine Unity of all life is behind our efforts and, as Huxley quotes from Whitehead "the fact of the instability of evil is the moral order of the world." Evil is that which makes for separateness; and that which makes for separateness is self-destructive.

However, it should not be thought that pacifism is the main subject of the book. The subject is an enquiry into ideals and the means for their realisation, and the book does not stand or fall with the acceptance or rejection of any of the concrete proposals. All the author is concerned to do is to try and find concrete means for the realisation of spiritual ideals, means which will not involve the self-stultifying use of violence. There are valuable hints for the practice of that self-discipline, physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual which must be followed if we are to tread what the Upanishads term "the ancient narrow path that stretches far away," the path that leads through consciousness of self to self-transcendence in the Self that is in all. There are important chapters on religious practices, on beliefs and their effect upon conduct and upon ethics, in all of which one can but admire the certainty of Mr. Huxley's touch, his unwavering fidelity to the spiritual ideals of ancient India (and of mystics all over the world) and the fearless manner in which he tackles the problems of putting those ideals into practice. He does not shirk the difficulties, and, if some of his suggestions should prove impracticable after all, he would be the last person to object, for they are all conceived in the clear light of reason and are free alike from the ridiculous fanaticisms of the crank and from the lazy opportunism (often mis-called common sense) which

betrays the ideals to which it pays lip-service. Behind and above all the special proposals, lies the deep spiritual appeal to ultimate values, and even if all the former should have to be rejected, the central message of the book would be unaffected.

Many books have been written on mysticism and the spiritual life, but most of them steer clear of the urgent practical problems of society or else take refuge in anachronistic simplifications which can do no good. Much has no doubt been written to help the aspirant with his personal problems, but we are all parts of one whole, and the spiritual life is not one which should be lived for oneself alone. Moreover, in an increasing number of countries, it is becoming next to impossible even to lead an individual spiritual life.

Even more books have been written on social reform, but not one that I have seen has Huxley's fine sense of the spiritual ideals that must underlie all real progress, nor his unerring discrimination between means that will help to bring about the realisation of those ideals, and means that, though plausible, will not. Those who are afraid of the very word pacifism should not allow themselves to be prejudiced by my inadequate summary of a clearly reasoned and soundly based case, but should read the book for themselves. Those who are trying to believe in spiritual idealism should read it to have their faith strengthened by its practical wisdom, and those who know for themselves something of its truth, and are trying to tread the Path, should read it if only to feel shame at the thought of how little they are doing to bring about their realisation in practice. Moreover, there are very few, even among real aspirants, who will not be helped and stimulated by the firm grip of, and clear

insight into, spiritual values. There is *something* in it for everyone and all should buy, borrow or steal a copy. It will be very surprising if those who *only* borrow do not end by buying or stealing.

THE END